

Changing Political and Intellectual Landscapes during the Mid-Ming:

Revival of Private Academies, Emergence of *jianghui*,

and the Enshrinement Case of 1584

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between political culture, Confucian intellectuals, and the rise of a new intellectual and cultural paradigm during the early to mid-Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644). The main goal of this thesis is to supplement current scholarship on Chen Xianzhang's 陳獻章 (1428 – 1500) life as an intellectual of Cantonese origin and his political activities at both local and national levels. Furthermore, the thesis supplements current research on the Yangming School and the School's contribution to the revitalization of private academies during the Ming with a study on the relationship between the three Confucian intellectuals enshrined in 1584 and the revival of private academies from the perspective of political history. In analyzing the relationship between these various aspects of the Ming political and intellectual landscapes, the thesis uses the 1584 Confucian Temple enshrinement, which involved Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472 – 1529) and his two older contemporary Confucian intellectuals, Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434 – 1484), as an entry point to explore the dynamics behind the political and cultural changes at the time. It aims to investigate the issue of cultural power versus imperial power, the central-versus-peripheral narrative in Ming politics, the evolution of how cultural power was asserted by members of the Confucian tradition, and the manifestation of such evolution in response to contemporary political discussions. The author begins with an analysis of the revival of private academies (*shuyuan* 書院) during the mid-Ming, and the influence of Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren in this revival. He then dissects the relationship between the revival of private academies and the emergence of *jianghui* 講會 (discussion gatherings)

in the following decades. Finally, the thesis discusses the struggle of mid-Ming intellectuals in gaining cultural legitimization for both private academies and *jianghui* activities by urging the imperial court to give due recognition through enshrining Wang, Chen, and Hu in the Confucian Temple, and the historical significance of this struggle to the development of the Confucian tradition in the Ming. The author ultimately argues that Chen Xianzhang, contrary to the common perception about him being a philosopher-poet who was indifferent to political discourses, was in fact a politically active intellectual; and that Chen's contributions to the revival of private academies in Guangdong predated that of Wang Yangming in the Jiangnan region.

To Sandy, whose love and patience keep me motivated,  
and Nemo, whose loyal companionship is invaluable

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 THE REVIVAL OF PRIVATE ACADEMIES IN THE MID-MING UNDER CHEN XIANZHANG AND HU JUREN.....	9
3 CHEN, HU, AND WANG YANGMING: THE EMERGENCE OF THE <i>JIANGHUI</i> CULTURE.....	44
Yangming's Merit and Theoretical Inventions.....	61
4 THE ENSHRINEMENT CASE OF 1584.....	70
Table 1: Table of Major Supporters of Each Enshrinement Candidates.....	91
5 CONCLUSION.....	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	96

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Table of Major Supporters of Each Enshrinement Candidates.....	91

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Enshrined in the year of 1584, Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500), Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434-1484), and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (Wang Shouren 王守仁, 1472-1529) were among the first Ming Confucian scholars to be honored in the Confucian Temple. The significance of their enshrinement, however, lies not in the fact that they were among the first to be enshrined during the Ming, but in the cultural and intellectual changes that they represent. Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), in his instrumental *Mingru xue'an* 明儒學案 [Survey of the Learnings of Ming Confucian Scholars], described these three figures as pioneers in Ming thought whose work paved the way for the later intellectual trend of “entering into profundity and subtlety.”<sup>1</sup> These two characteristics became prevalent in Ming thought when the “School of the Mind” (*xinxue* 心學)<sup>2</sup> led by Wang

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<sup>1</sup> 「有明之學，自白沙始入精微。」Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Mingru xue'an* 明儒學案 [Survey of the Learnings of Ming Confucian Scholars] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 5.78.

<sup>2</sup> The term *xinxue* is generally used to refer to the school of thought promoted primarily by Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139 – 1192) and Wang Yangming. Hence, *xinxue* is also known as the Lu-Wang School on certain occasions. The essence of *xinxue* is the emphasis on one’s ability to cultivate the “original mind” (*ben xin* 本心), in which meaning of the world is constructed. Although Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷 named Wang Yangming’s school of thought as “Dynamic Idealism,” which was likely inspired by the convention of naming different systems of thought in accordance with the Western philosophical tradition, it seems that, in this case, Chan’s translation of *xinxue* involved only the philosophical aspect of Wang Yangming’s teachings and therefore lacks the clarity needed for the purpose of this study in addressing the overall body of Wang Yangming’s followers, students, and associates. As a result, I choose to use the Yangming School in reference to the group of Wang’s students as a collective and use the name “School of the Mind” to refer to *xinxue* 心學, the overall school of thought to which Wang Yangming’s philosophies were the most closely associated in the opinion of his contemporaries. In choosing names in reference to a collective of people in this study, however, I tend to adhere to the names assigned to these groups by their contemporaries themselves. Sometimes, *xinxue* would also be referred to as the Lu-Wang school of thought. Nonetheless, one must also be noted that it is extremely difficult to find names or categories that are sufficient enough to account for all the various groups of intellectuals in traditional China, for they were a diverse class of people and often had conflicting interests even when some of them appear to be in the same subgroup. Therefore, it is merely for our own convenience to assign these relatively definable names for these groups of intellectuals and fulfil the purpose of the discussion here. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source*



Yangming triumphed as the new intellectual orthodoxy throughout most of the latter half of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

Among the small group of secondary literature on the generation of Confucian intellectuals of Chen Xianzhang, Hu Juren, and Wang Yangming, Chen Yufu 陳郁夫 and Jiang Yunming 姜允明 analyzed Chen Xianzhang's thought and poetry in great detail in their respective works. Chen Yufu's *Jiangmen xueji* 江門學記 [Study of the School of Jiangmen]<sup>3</sup> analyzed the thought of Xianzhang and his students. And he has also provided interested readers a solid chronological biography of Chen Xianzhang, which is by far the most detailed biographical study of Xianzhang in any language.<sup>4</sup> Jiang Yunming's *Wang Yangming yu Chen Baisha* 王陽明與陳白沙 [Wang Yangming and Chen Baisha],<sup>5</sup> *Chen Baisha qiren qixue* 陳白沙其人其學 [Chen Baisha: the Man and His Works],<sup>6</sup> and *The Search for Mind: Chen Pai-sha, Philosopher-Poet*<sup>7</sup> contributed to the understanding of the relationship between Chen Xianzhang's poetic works and his

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*Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 654; Lee Cheukyin 李焯然, "Zhuzi xuedi and the Restoration of Cheng-Zhu Tradition in Mid-Ming," *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 173.

<sup>3</sup> Chen Yufu, *Jiangmen xueji* 江門學記 [Study of the School of Jiangmen] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Chen Yufu, *Ming Baisha xiansheng Xianzhang nianpu* 明白沙先生獻章年譜 [A Chronological Biography of Master Baisha, Chen Xiansheng, of the Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Jiang Yunming, *Wang Yangming yu Chen Baisha* 王陽明與陳白沙 [Wang Yangming and Chen Baisha] (Taipei: Wunan, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Jiang Yunming, *Chen Baisha qiren qixue* 陳白沙其人其學 [Chen Baisha: the Man and His Works] (Taipei: Hungye wenhua, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Jiang Yunming, *The Search for Mind, Chen Pai-sha, Philosopher-Poet* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980).

philosophies. Of the older generation of scholars, Jian Youwen 簡又文 (1896 – 1978) was perhaps the most concerned with the issues surrounding Chen Xianzhang. He has written two short monographs on Chen’s philosophies and his distinctiveness as a Cantonese thinker.<sup>8</sup> Lü Miao-fen 呂妙芬, on the other hand, has also done an in depth comparison between Chen Xianzhang and his fellow enshrinee of 1584, Hu Juren, in philosophical terms in her *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang* 胡居仁與陳獻章 [Hu Juren and Chen Xianzhang].<sup>9</sup> Lu’s series of studies on the *jianghui* culture of the Ming also has informed this study of the relationship between the revival of private academies and the emergence of the *jianghui*. Lü Miao-fen’s major studies on the *jianghui* culture of the Ming included three articles: “Yangming xue jianghui 陽明學講會 (Discussion Gatherings of the Yangming School),”<sup>10</sup> “Yangming xuezhe de jianghui yu youlun 陽明學者的講會與友論 (Discussion Gatherings and Conversation Between Friends for Scholars of the Yangming School),”<sup>11</sup> “Ming dai Ningguo fu de Yangming jianghui huodong 明代寧國府的陽明講會活動 (Discussion Gatherings and Activities in the

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<sup>8</sup> Jian Youwen, *Baisha zi yanjiu* 白沙子研究 [A Study of Chen Baisha] (Hong Kong: Jianshi mengjin shuwu, 1970), and *Baisha zi zhi zi de* 白沙子之自得 [The Self-cultivation of Chen Baisha] (Hong Kong: Baisha wen hua jiao yu ji jin hui, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang* 胡居仁與陳獻章 [Hu Juren and Chen Xianzhang] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Lü Miao-fen, “Yangming xue jianghui” 陽明學講會 (Discussion Gatherings of the Yangming School), *Xinshixue* 新史學 [New Historical Study] 9, no. 2 (1998): 45-87.

<sup>11</sup> Lü Miao-fen, “Yangming xuezhe de jianghui yu youlun” 陽明學者的講會與友論 (Discussion Gatherings and Conversation Between Friends for Scholars of the Yangming School), *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 [Chinese Studies] 17, no. 1 (1999): 79-104.

Ningguo Prefecture during the Ming),”<sup>12</sup> and a book *Yangming xue shiren shequn* 陽明學士人社群.<sup>13</sup>

However, unfortunately, none of the above literature has provided a historical analysis of Chen Xianzhang as an intellectual in the context of his historical and political realities, namely his upbringing, his personal network, and his life experience, and how these realities had led him to accomplish his achievement as the only Cantonese thinker to ever be enshrined in the Confucian Temple. More importantly, despite considerable scholarship on Ming Confucian intellectuals and private academies, there still exists a void in our understanding of the relationship between Chen and his two other enshrinees of 1584 from the perspective of political history. The essence of this thesis is to provide a new analysis of Chen Xianzhang as a political figure and argue that Chen was significant in developing a Cantonese-oriented educational culture in Guangdong. By doing so, the thesis builds upon the works of Chen Yufu and Jiang Yunming on Chen Xianzhang’s life, and Lü Miao-fen’s research on the Yangming School’s contribution to the revival of private academies in the Jiangnan region. Hopefully, by supplementing their works with a study of Chen Xianzhang as a politically active intellectual and Chen’s case in the enshrinement of 1584, the thesis will show that the revival and politicization of local private academies predated Wang Yangming.

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<sup>12</sup> Lü Miao-fen, “Ming dai Ningguo fu de Yangming jianghui huodong” 明代寧國府的陽明講會活動 (Discussion Gatherings and Activities in the Ningguo Prefecture during the Ming), *Xin shixue* 新史學 [New Historical Studies] 12, no. 1 (2001): 53-113.

<sup>13</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren shequn* 陽明學士人社群 [The Wang Yang-ming School during the Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica, 2003).

During the lifetimes of these three intellectuals,<sup>14</sup> several important developments took place in the Chinese empire. Since the mid-Ming, there had been a wide-spread revitalization of private academies<sup>15</sup> at the local level in the Jiangnan region and in southern China, most notably in Guangdong. This was the time when Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren were the most active in their respective geographical regions in Jiangxi and Guangdong. As non-degree holders, Chen and Hu were devoted educators in their local communities and enjoyed a reputation as prominent regionally-based intellectuals. Although there had been influential private academies before the Ming,<sup>16</sup> such as the Bailudong Academy 白鹿洞書院 (the Academy of the White Deer Grotto), which was rebuilt by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130 – 1200), Hu Hung’s 胡瑗 (993 – 1059) and Zhang Shi’s 張栻 (1133 – 1180) Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院, Lu Jiuyuan’s 陸九淵 (1139 – 1192)

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<sup>14</sup> The terms “Confucian intellectual,” “Confucian literati,” and “Confucian scholar-officials” are generally used interchangeably and are all referring to the *shi* 士 stratum in traditional Chinese societies. However, one must keep in mind that there are slight differences between the precise definitions of these three terms. I choose to use the term “Confucian Intellectuals” in most cases to refer to the traditional *shi* class rather than the more conventional choice of “Confucian scholar-officials” due partly to Professor Yü Ying-shih’s influence. I agree with him on the notion that the *shi* class in traditional China not only were mere scholars, or bureaucrats, or a combination of both, but a specific group of people that share a collective ultimate goal in establishing and maintaining order at all levels of the society through asserting their cultural and intellectual power empowered by the Confucian tradition. In this sense, “Confucian Intellectuals” is a better umbrella term for including those Confucian thinkers who were never part of the bureaucracy, such as two of the three intellectuals in discussion here. Although many scholars use the term “literati” to refer to *shi*, I believe that usage is not as suitable to my focus on the political history of Confucian intellectuals. Therefore, I am more inclined to use Professor Yü’s translation.

<sup>15</sup> By private academy, I am strictly referring to the type of educational institutions in traditional China that was known as *shuyuan* 書院, which was operated and under the control of individual Confucian intellectuals. These private academies enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and were not considered as a part of the state institution. – despite how crucial state support might have been to their establishment. For an article showing how crucial state support was to the re-establishment of the White Deer Grotto Academy, see Tillman’s article in *Asia Major*. Hoyt Tillman, “Intellectuals and Officials in Action: Academies and Granaries in Sung China.” *Asia Major*, 4.2 (1991): 1-15.

<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, private academies are in a sense private counterparts to official local schools (*guanxue* 官學) ran by the state and local officials.

Xiangshan Academy 象山書院, and Lü Zuqian's 呂祖謙 (1137 – 1187) Lize Academy 麗澤書院 during the Southern Song (1127 – 1279),<sup>17</sup> it was during the Ming, according to Lü Miao-fen, that private academies became centers for discussions regarding local affairs and issues. And it was also during the Ming that their influence on local governments and officials saw a remarkable rise.<sup>18</sup>

What differentiate private academies in the Ming from those prior to the Ming, then, is essentially the level of involvement of their participants in local societies. The leaders of private academies in the Ming did not shy away from addressing local issues, including politically sensitive topics.<sup>19</sup> In the cases of Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren, their activeness in promoting their private academies would also involve building personal networks among influential local officials. This was particularly true in Chen Xianzhang's case, as he was well-connected to a number of important political figures in Guangdong throughout his life. His relationship with them helped him advanced his cause of popularizing private academies in Guangdong, where private academies rarely existed prior to his time.

Many regularly gathered groups in these private academies would eventually turn into the even more politically active *jianghui* 講會 (discussion gatherings) groups, which were constantly attempting to influence policies at both the local level and the national

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<sup>17</sup> Chen Yuanhui 陳元輝 et al. ed., *Zhongguo gudai de shuyuan zhidu* 中國古代的書院制度 [The Institution of Academies in Pre-modern China] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1981), 39-53.

<sup>18</sup> Lü Miao-fen has sufficiently pointed out and argued that Ming private academies had an important role in maintaining order at the local levels. Lü Miao-fen, "Yangming xue jianghui," 45-46.

<sup>19</sup> Lü Miao-fen, "Yangming xue jianghui," 45.

level during the mid- and late Ming. Based on Lü Miao-fen's findings, most of the *jianghui* groups was born out of gatherings in the private academies in the early days of their development.<sup>20</sup> The locally-connected private academies offered great soil for the growth of these *jianghui* groups. Lü Miao-fen attributed the emergence of these *jianghui* activities to mostly Wang Yangming's and his students' efforts.<sup>21</sup> However, the contribution of other intellectuals of this time period was rarely discussed. Especially Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren's contributions as pioneers who paved the way for the eventual development of *jianghui* by promoting private academies as cultural spaces for political discussions in various parts of the country, in particular southeastern and southern China. It was no coincidence for the *jianghui* groups to be particularly influential in these two regions of China in the late Ming.

Chen Xianzhang's and Hu Juren's endeavors in bringing private academies back to relevance, and Wang Yangming's equal commitment to the popularization of *jianghui* were largely motivated by their intrinsic sense of purpose as Confucian intellectuals and educators.<sup>22</sup> The development of private academies and *jianghui*, as manifestations of the ideal of mid-Ming intellectuals, resonated with the larger intellectual trend of the era. As

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<sup>20</sup> Lü Miao-fen, "Yangming xue jianghui," 46.

<sup>21</sup> Among them, Lü Miao-fen presented the most evidence and the most convincing argument.

<sup>22</sup> Intellectuals, or the *shi* 士 class, deeply believed in the ideal of establishing Confucian order in China. One way to achieve it was through education. Throughout different periods of time in Chinese history, the *shi* class operated in different realms with different goals. But their ultimate goal of "civilizing and transforming" (教化) the Chinese society remains the same throughout time. Therefore, sometimes the role of an intellectual and the role of an educator do overlap each other, but for clarity's sake, I will make separate references to intellectuals and educators. In addition, a detailed analysis of the concept of *shi* is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a well-established research of the *shi* class, see Professor Yü Ying-shih's 余英時 *Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua* 士與中國文化 [Shi and Chinese Culture] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2002).

Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895 – 1990) suggested in a penetrating statement: “Ming intellectuals had a general tendency to place emphasis on practicality rather than merely on pure knowledge.”<sup>23</sup> Chen Xianzhang’s, Hu Juren’s, and Wang Yangming’s efforts were reflections of the needs and desires of the Confucian community as a collective at the time.

Through examining Chen Xianzhang’s and Hu Juren’s early endeavors in reviving and promoting private academies, the pattern of the “localization of elite” was first revealed. And with the rise of Wang Yangming, Wang’s philosophies provided a solid theoretical foundation for the further advancement of this pattern. Born from this continuous development was the *jianghui* culture and the politically active *jianghui* groups all over south China. The development reached a fruitful conclusion in 1584. After a series of debates at court that spanned across several decades, Chen’s, Hu’s, and Wang’s contribution to the Confucian tradition was recognized by the state in the most glorious fashion. The enshrinement case of 1584 revealed not only the intertwined relationship between imperial power and cultural power, but the process of how Chen’s, Hu’s, and Wang’s lifetime endeavors were legitimized by their followers and students after their deaths. And what unfolded with the process was a picture of how political culture during the mid-Ming evolved with intellectual and cultural developments at not only the national level, but at the local levels as well.

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<sup>23</sup> 「明學的一般傾向，最顯著的，是他們的重行而輕知。」 Qian Mu 錢穆, *Wang Shouren* 王守仁 [Wang Shouren] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1943), 20. In translating *xing* 行 in this context, I chose to use the term “practicality” because Qian Mu’s original statement was emphasizing not only action of the Ming intellectuals, but the intellectuals’ attention to the effectiveness of their action.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REVIVAL OF PRIVATE ACADEMIES IN THE MID-MING UNDER CHEN

#### XIANZHANG AND HU JUREN

Private academies were once popular throughout China. During the Song (960 – 1279), local academies enjoyed a long period of growth.<sup>24</sup> In the earliest years of the Northern Song (960 – 1127), there hardly existed any local schools and private academies.<sup>25</sup> The situation began to change a few decades later. From 1007 to 1038, numerous prefectures began to operate their own local schools. And private academies had also begun to appear.<sup>26</sup> Some of the influential private academies were first established during this time period. Overall, the local education system thrived under the stable social and economic conditions of the Northern Song.<sup>27</sup> However, because the Northern Song state was more interested in supporting state-operated schools (*guanxue* 官學), the growth of private academies was limited and short-lived. With students realizing the fact that attending a state-operated school offered much better prospect than attending a local private academy, private academies went into a long-term decline since the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them were completely abandoned by 1107.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Chen Yuanhui et al. ed., *Zhongguo gudai de shuyuan zhidu*, 13-16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>28</sup> In Wang Yi's 王禕 (1321 – 1372) *You Ludong ji* 遊鹿洞記 (Journey to the Deer Grotto), he described: "[Private Academies] were completely out of existence by the last years of the Chongning reign 崇寧 (1102 – 1107) (「書院到崇寧末乃盡廢。」). Ibid., 20.



It was not until during Zhu Xi's generation in the Southern Song (1127 – 1279) that private academies saw a revitalization. According to Chen Yuanhui, the late 12<sup>th</sup> century marked a period of rapid growth for private academies.<sup>29</sup> This revitalization was mainly under the leadership of several individual intellectuals, who were also the leaders of the prominent *daoxue* 道學 (learning of the way) fellowship in the Southern Song, including most notably Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian. During the Southern Song, four influential private academies were restored to their former glory. According to Wang Yinglin's 王應麟 (1223 – 1296) *Yuhai* 玉海 [Encyclopedia of the Jade Ocean], at the time, the Confucian circle regarded the Bailudong Academy, the Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院 (Foothill Forest Academy),<sup>30</sup> the Suiyang Academy 睢陽書院 (Academy South of the Sui River),<sup>31</sup> and the Songyang Academy 嵩陽書院 (Academy at Mt. Song)<sup>32</sup> as the “Big Four of Academies.”<sup>33</sup> Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254 – 1323), on the other hand, suggested in his *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 [Encyclopedic Examination of Literary Documents] two alternatives for the Big Four: the Shigu Academy 石鼓書院 (the Stone Drum

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>30</sup> The Yuelu Academy was located in modern day Hunan, near the Changsha area.

<sup>31</sup> Located in modern day Henan. Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 ed., *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集 [Atlas of Historical Maps of China] vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 1996), 52-33.

<sup>32</sup> Located at the foothills of Mt. Song 嵩山.

<sup>33</sup> Chen Yuanhui et al. ed., *Zhongguo gudai de shuyuan*, 14-15.

Academy) and the Maoshan Academy 茅山書院 (the Academy at Mt. Mao).<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, private academies were flourishing again in the Southern Song.

Since the revival of private academies was closely connected to the rise of the *daoxue* fellowship, it simply makes one wonder if there is a relationship between the two movements. Following the restorations of the Academy of the White Deer Grotto and the Yuelu Academy, which were initiated by Zhu Xi, private academies throughout China came alive again. The number of academies in different counties and prefectures saw a tremendous growth.<sup>35</sup> Most of these counties and prefectures were concentrated in the affluent Jiangnan 江南 region, in particular Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Hunan, and Fujian. And they often hired prominent *daoxue* figures to carry out the teaching duties.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, the *daoxue* fellowship at least served as trailblazers at the forefront of this revitalization of private academies during the Southern Song. As the influence of the *daoxue* fellowship was the strongest in the Jiangnan region, the area remained a popular place to construct new private academies.<sup>37</sup>

Evidently, the revitalization of private academies was to a certain degree related to the flourishing of the Confucian intellectual community. Under this assumption, the revitalization of private academies during the mid-Ming would fall under the same category. One interesting phenomenon in the mid-Ming, however, is that the wave of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50-55.

private academies would extend further southward to the Lingnan region. Since the early Ming, the state had plans to improve local education through increasing the number of state-operated schools throughout the country.<sup>38</sup> Ming Taizu 明太祖 (r. 1368 – 1398) even once specifically ordered the local governments to disburse meals to the students at all the state-operated schools in the country.<sup>39</sup> With the state-operated schools thriving, private academies, on the other hand, were largely ignored. It was not until during the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century that the situation had begun to change. Standing on the forefront of this new wave of revitalization of private academies were Chen Xianzhang's, Hu Juren's, and Wang Yangming's generations of intellectuals. In fact, Chen and Hu were the most instrumental in leading the development of private academies in this period.

Chen Xianzhang, whose courtesy name was Gongfu 公甫 and was better known by the byname of Chen Baisha 陳白沙<sup>40</sup> was born in 1428, in Xinhui 新會, Guangdong.<sup>41</sup> As a child, Chen Xianzhang was raised in a fairly self-sufficient family.<sup>42</sup> When Xianzhang was twenty years old, he passed the provincial level civil service

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>39</sup> 「秋八月，命天下學校師生，日給廩膳。」Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755) et al., *Mingshi*, 明史 [History of the Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 2.35.

<sup>40</sup> He was given this byname due to the fact that he lived and lectured in the Baisha district in Xinhui, Guangdong for most of his life.

<sup>41</sup> The historical Xinhui at the time covered more territory. But it was still primarily today's Xinhui. Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu* vol. 7, 72-73.

<sup>42</sup> In his own words, Xianzhang described the livelihood of his family in his childhood as 「有田二頃，耕之足以自養」 ([My family] had two acres of fields. Cultivating them was enough for us to be self-sustained) and 「一生不受人間供養」 (I have never in my life been financially supported by other people [outside of the family]) in his letters to friends. Chen Yufu 陳郁夫, *Ming Baisha xiansheng Xianzhang nianpu*, 1-2.

examination and obtained the qualification to take the metropolitan examination in Beijing. The next year, in 1448, Chen travelled to the capital for the spring examination and successfully obtained the rank of *fubang jinshi* 副榜進士 (Presented Scholar of the Supplementary List).<sup>43</sup> He was also granted admission to the Imperial University (or Imperial Academy, *guozi jian* 國子監) to study for the next palace level examination. However, after spending the next three years at the capital preparing for the palace level exam, Chen failed to obtain a standard *jinshi* 進士 (Presented Scholar)<sup>44</sup> degree and had to return home southward. After another three years of lecturing and studying in his private academy at the Xiaolu Mountain 小廬山 in Xinhui, Guangdong. Xianzhang travelled to Jiangxi and studied under the then prominent Confucian thinker Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391-1469). Chen Xianzhang was a dedicated educator and intellectual who have never officially served in any bureaucratic positions.<sup>45</sup> It was not until late in his life that the Ming court decided to grant him the honorary title of Editor at the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlin yuan jiantao* 翰林院檢討). Chen spent the majority of his life in his native Guangdong until his death in 1500.

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<sup>43</sup> This is not the standard *jinshi* degree, but is a degree granted to those who did not succeed in the capital exams but was allowed to be admitted to the Imperial Academy as students. Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 219.

<sup>44</sup> Sometimes also translated as Metropolitan Graduates. Charles Hucker defined it as “a degree or status often compared to the academic doctorate in the modern West, conferred on successful candidates in the highest-level regular civil service recruitment examinations, qualifying them for appointment to government office.” *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 167.

<sup>45</sup> However, throughout his life, there have been several occasions where he was granted visiting positions at the court. Most of those occasions happened when he was in the capital.

Born in 1434 in Jiangxi, Hu Juren followed a similar path to his contemporary Chen Xianzhang. He started learning the classics at a young age and had the intention to pursue an office through the examinations. But at the age of 21, he decided to forego his goal to take the exams and went to study under the tutelage of Wu Yubi, who was also Chen Xianzhang's master. Hu and Chen were both heavily influenced by Wu Yubi's style of teaching and ideas, especially Wu's commitment to being a "freelance" intellectual outside of the political establishment and his dedication to his private academy. This deeply rooted influence essentially led both Chen and Hu to the decision of withdrawing from bureaucratic life.<sup>46</sup> Despite his withdrawal from central politics, Hu was active in academia. He was the lead-lecturer at the Academy of the White Deer Grotto since 1480, until he passed away in 1484.<sup>47</sup> Hu Juren was undoubtedly a dedicated local educator in his native Jiangxi. Being from an area that was in the vicinity of Nanchang 南昌 and Jinhua 金華, where the Cheng-Zhu school of thought was the most influential, Hu Juren was closely associated with the Cheng-Zhu tradition and served the

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<sup>46</sup> *Mingru xue'an*, 2.29-43.

<sup>47</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang*, 180-182.

region by leading the restoration and revival of the Academy of the White Deer Grotto.<sup>48</sup>

Hu was also once the lead-lecturer of the Lize Academy 麗澤堂 in Jiangxi.<sup>49</sup>

Wang Shouren, or better known as Wang Yangming, was born in 1472 in Yuyao 餘姚, Zhejiang. Wang was perhaps one of the most influential and polarizing Confucian intellectuals during the Ming dynasty. His stellar career as a statesman, military commander, and philosopher made him one of the most fascinating figures in late imperial China. His students' political activeness was remarkable and often credited for the popularization of his teachings in the latter half of the Ming. Wang Yangming was once a firm believer in the Cheng-Zhu school of thought. But his thinking departed from the Cheng-Zhu school shortly afterward and became truly original. Wang failed the examinations twice before passing it in 1499. After expressing opposition against the then powerful court eunuch Liu Jin 劉瑾 (1451-1510), Wang was demoted to Longchang 龍場, Guizhou. Shortly after Liu Jin's downfall and his subsequent execution in 1510, Wang Yangming made his way back into central politics. Leading the successful military campaign against the rebelling prince Zhu Chenhao 朱宸濠 (d. 1521) elevated Wang

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<sup>48</sup> More precisely, Wang Zongmu 王宗沐 (fl. 1544), while serving as the Deputy Regional Superintendent of Education of the Jiangxi province, was the one who restored the Academy of the White Deer Grotto. The *Mingshi* stated: "Zongmu was particularly good at civil management. While serving as the Deputy Regional Superintendent of Education of Jiangxi, he reconstructed the Academy of the White Deer Grotto and introduced numerous students to attend lectures and study within" (宗沐尤習吏治。歷江西提學副使。修白鹿洞書院，引諸生講習其中)。However, Hu Juren was behind the operation of the academy and wrote a new set of regulations and rules for the academy. They are recorded in Hu's collection of writings. Hu Juren, *Hu Juren wenji* 胡居仁文集 [Collected Writings of Hu Juren] (Jiangxi: Jiangxi renmin shubanshe, 2013), 2.107; Chen, *Zhongguo gudai de shuyuan*, 63; *Mingshi*, 282.5876.

<sup>49</sup> Although this academy shares the same name with Song scholar Lü Zuqian's academy in Jinhua, Zhejiang, but it is unclear whether Hu Juren intentionally selected this same title for his academy, as Lü Zuqian's academy was abolished long before Hu Juren's time. Lü Miao-fen, *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang*, 176.

Yangming to the height of his official career. He was granted the title of the Earl of Xinjian 新建伯 in 1523 and was made the Minister of War at Nanjing the same year. Philosophically, Wang was commonly considered as the closest to the Southern Song Confucian intellectual Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193), and was therefore frequently linked to the conveniently termed “School of the Mind” by his contemporaries. During his lifetime, Wang Yangming was also known to be a supporter of private academies. Most notably, he helped to establish the Longgang Academy 龍崗書院 in Guizhou 貴州 and the Jishan Academy 稽山書院 in Kuaiji 會稽, Zhejiang.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, Chen Xianzhang’s path to revitalizing private academies in Guangdong was a more difficult one. Unlike Hu Juren, or even the later Wang Yangming, Chen was neither from a region that was known to have a strong tradition in producing intellectuals (Hu was from the county of Yugan 餘干, which was very close to Nanchang 南昌 and Jinhua 金華, where both cities had a strong reputation of producing influential intellectuals since the Southern Song) nor from a region that was in the vicinity of important economic centers at the time (Wang was from the affluent area of coastal Zhejiang where the academic environment was robust and there were numerous local academies, both private and state-run). Being from the relatively remote region of southern Guangdong, Chen Xianzhang had to develop a personal network with local and provincial officials from the ground up when commencing his endeavors in establishing private academies in the area.

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<sup>50</sup> Chen Yuanhui et al. ed., *Zhongguo gudai de shuyuan*, 67.

Without strong connections to and support from a historically learned community in the political and economic centers and lacking an abundance of material resources at his disposal, Chen Xianzhang's experience offered many insights. As Professor Yü Ying-shih pointed out, an intellectual himself must have been a product of the realities of his time.<sup>51</sup> Chen Xianzhang, as a historical person of an average background from a region on the margins of the Chinese empire must have faced numerous challenges while on his way to regional and national relevance. In analyzing his impact on the revitalization of private academies in Guangdong, his life experiences, his personal network, and the political reality in which he lived must be taken into account as well.

Without much literary production other than a wealth of poems, epitaphs for other people, and plenty of personal correspondences, it is sometimes difficult to understand Chen Xianzhang's life and influence on certain areas in a given point of time.<sup>52</sup> However, one should be able to get a glimpse of his overall influence on the revitalization of private academies in Guangdong during the mid-Ming by examining his activities throughout his relatively long life and his activeness in building his network in Guangdong from 1456 to the late 1400s.

Little is known of Chen Xianzhang's life before he turned the age of 17. All that was recorded about Xianzhang's childhood was mentioned briefly in his biography, where he was described as "feeble as a child," but possessed "an extraordinarily keen and

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<sup>51</sup> Yü Ying-shih 余英時, *Chen Yinke wan nian shi wen shi zheng* 陳寅恪晚年詩文釋證 [Interpretation and Textual Reexamination of Chen Yinke's Later Poems and Essays] (Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1998), 18-23.

<sup>52</sup> Yang Zhengxian 楊正顯, "Baisha xue di dingwei yu chengli" 白沙學的定位與成立 (The State and Establishment of the Chen Baisha School), *sixiangshi* 思想史 [Intellectual History] no. 2, Yang Zhengxian et al. ed., (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2014), 3.



perceptive mind.” Any books that passed in front of him were memorized immediately.<sup>53</sup> Though these are laudatory words commonly seen in biographies of historical figures in traditional China, it is enough to inform the readers of Chen’s demonstrated promise as a young man.

Both Chen Xianzhang and his older brother, Xianwen 獻文 (b. 1424)<sup>54</sup> were given the resources to pursue a rigorous education in the literati tradition. Xianwen also went on to become a renowned literati in Guangdong.<sup>55</sup> What can be told from the limited records of Xianzhang’s early life, it seems, is that Chen Xianzhang’s family, although not the most affluent of all families in Guangdong, was financially equipped enough to support the two young sons’ education, which was not common given Xinhui’s remote location. According to this statement in Xianzhang’s biography, the assumption seems to be correct:

Since an early age, [Xianzhang was able to] read the [genre of] Confucian Classics.<sup>56</sup> [He was] moved and determined to become an equal to the Confucian

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<sup>53</sup> 「警悟絕人，讀書一覽輒記。」 *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Although not as relevant to my focus of Xianzhang, I believe a note is deserved here. Xianwen’s courtesy name is in fact not yet confirmed by historical evidence. The biography compiled by modern scholar Chen Yufu 陳郁夫 did not provide his sources for this piece of information. What is known for certain at this point about Chen Xianwen’s other names and titles is that he was known as Guyu 古愚 at least by his circle of friends and the literati community in Guangdong because Xianzhang’s student Li Chengji 李承箕 (1452 – 1505) wrote an account about him. The piece is contained in Huang Zongxi’s work, the *Ming Wenhai* 明文海, in *juan* 103. Conflictingly, another person whose name was Chen Gongzai was also active in the Guangdong region and was closely associated with the Nanyuan (Southern Garden) Poets 南園詩派 who were generally about three generations younger than Xianzhang and his brother. For the purpose of his thesis, this discussion is perhaps less relevant. But the relationship between Xianzhang and the Nanyuan Poets might be an interesting topic to explore in another day.

<sup>55</sup> Although there is no extant record of the works by Chen Xianwen, but Xianwen certainly enjoyed at least some reputation as a literati, so much so that it was enough for Li Chengji to dedicate a tribute to him.

<sup>56</sup> It is unclear what combination of Confucian Classics Xianzhang was able to get access to. And by no means does this description of Xianzhang’s early reading habits indicate the level of access Xianzhang had

masters over the years. And as he read the various biographies of the loyal martyrs since the Qin and the Han, he was inspired in awe and in appreciation, then was moved to tears and snot.<sup>57</sup>

少覽經書，慨然有志於思齊，讀秦漢以來忠烈諸傳，則感激齎咨，繼之以涕洟。

This statement is particularly telling because of two reasons. First, it clearly states that Chen Xianzhang was able to read a specific genre of Confucian Classics at a young age, or might even had some level of regular access to the books. Even with the printing industry thriving during the Ming, to have access to printed books was an uncommon feat for any family. Secondly, it also indicates that Xinhui, a relatively remote area of southern Guangdong, was already culturally developed enough to be in possession of such an impressive book market and printing industry that a family with mediocre resources was able to afford books for its children. This upbringing certainly had some impact on Xianzhang's intellectual development, as he became a champion of private academies later in his life.

At the age of 19, Xianzhang's intellectual promise had truly begun to shine when he was admitted to the county level school (*xuanxue* 縣學). After reading Chen Xianzhang's written works, the instructor at the school was thoroughly impressed by Xianzhang's talent at such a young age. He described Xianzhang as "an extraordinary

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to printed books. However, I believe this statement must have some significance to the compiler of Xianzhang's *nianpu*. Perhaps the statement was put in place to illustrate Xianzhang's early life as a student. On the other hand, it also can be a mere laudatory statement about Xianzhang's talent.

<sup>57</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 8.

person; the rules of this world cannot bind him.”<sup>58</sup> In summary, Xianzhang spent his early life in a surprisingly academic environment. Like many of his contemporaries, Xianzhang initially followed the typical path of laboring himself over the civil service examinations. However, it was during his time at the Imperial Academy that his vision for his own future took a dramatic turn.

At the age of twenty and with admission to the Imperial Academy, Xianzhang must have been feeling extremely confident at the time. Yet, during his three-year stay in the capital from 1448 to 1451, Chen Xianzhang was unavoidably pulled into a world that he was previously unfamiliar with. And his experience in the capital would prove to be influential to his perception of the Ming state and his view of the prospect of serving in the bureaucracy. The two events that dominated that time period were the chaos in the capital following the capture of the Yingzong Emperor 英宗 (r. 1436 – 1449, 1457 – 1464) by the Mongols, and the constant turmoil caused by rebels in the southern coastal provinces, including Guangdong.

During Xianzhang’s three-year stay in the capital, the Ming state was undergoing a series of political crises. First, it was the downfall of the Yingzong Emperor’s reign under the powerful eunuch Wang Zhen 王振 (d. 1449), who was asserting his influence on state affairs and indirectly controlling the Yingzong Emperor’s decision making at the highest level of government. The political environment in the capital at the time was undoubtedly a tumultuous one. By this time, the initial robustness of Yingzong’s policies

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<sup>58</sup> 「陳生非常人也，世網不足以羈之。」 Ibid., 11.

had largely diminished.<sup>59</sup> And with the passing of capable ministers and statesmen, most notably Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1364 – 1444), Yang Rong 楊榮 (1371 – 1440), and Yang Pu 楊溥 (1372 – 1446), as well as with the death of the influential Grand Emperor Dowager Zhang 張太皇太后 (1379 – 1442), Wang Zhen's power was left unsupervised and the bureaucracy turned ineffective in implementing its policies. By 1449, after the Mongol tribal leader Esen 也先 (d. 1455) of the Oirat 瓦剌 tribe embarked on a military campaign against the Ming state and captured the Yingzong Emperor at Fort Tumu 土木堡 (or Tumubao, Fort of Earth and Wood),<sup>60</sup> the entire Ming establishment was in a state of great instability.<sup>61</sup>

As a student at the Imperial Academy, Chen Xianzhang must have witnessed and personally experienced the state of disorder after Yingzong's capture by Esen. His perception about the Ming central state's future and his own vision of a future career in the bureaucracy must have taken a toll. It also seems that Chen Xianzhang, who had not discussed much about his Cantonese identity until that point, began to pay more attention to the turmoil in his native Guangdong at the time. In Chen Xianzhang's writings, his views on the capture of Yingzong and the subsequent chaos are nowhere to be found.

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<sup>59</sup> Primarily in the form of tax deductions for the peasants, according to the *Mingshi* 明史, in the section of the annual under the second year of Yingzong's reign.

<sup>60</sup> Fort Tumu was near today's Huailai 懷來 in the Hebei province.

<sup>61</sup> Gu Yingtai in his *Mingshi jishi benmo* vividly described the situation at the time: "On the seventeenth day of the month, the entire body of ranked ministers gathered in the palace and was briefed about the defeat in the battle [with Esen, and the capture of Yingzong]. Whispers spread among them, along with a tremendous fear." 「十七日，百官集闕下，頗聞敗報，私告語，驚懼。」 Gu Yingtai 谷應泰, *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 33.475.

Instead, Chen Xianzhang wrote extensively about the rebels in the south.<sup>62</sup> In his preface written for the genealogical record of a Tang clan in Guangdong, he wrote: “In the autumn of 1449, the rebels under Huang [Suyang 肅養] (the leader of the largest rebel syndicate in Guangdong at the time) rose up [to create disturbances]. The entire commandery [of Nanhai]<sup>63</sup> was in turmoil” 正統己巳之秋，黃賊起南海，一郡騷然。<sup>64</sup>

On another occasion, Chen mentioned the Huang rebels again.<sup>65</sup> This time was in an epitaph he wrote for a locally prominent man and the father of a Deputy Censor-in-chief Lu. He praised the late Mr. Lu for his bravery in leading a group of locals into the city walls during the Huang rebel rampage:

During the Zhengtong 正統 years, the common people [of Xinhui] feared the arrival of the havoc-wreaking Huang rebels. Mr. Lu led the commoners to the city and [made sure] the elderly and the children were held [securely] and taken care of. When those [soldiers] who were guarding the passage to the fort [of the city]

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<sup>62</sup> The use of the term *zei* 賊 certainly has different connotations in different contexts. At times the term is used to refer to mere bandits. However, in this case, these outlaws might very well be rebels who were taking direct action against the political establishment. This would resonate with the motivation behind the Ming historical writings’ vivid description of the brutality of these outlaws when they were actively raiding the villages in the Guangdong region, and the legitimatization of the Ming state’s quelling of them.

<sup>63</sup> The Commandery of Nanhai was the former name of the Xinhui region, which had its seat in Guangzhou. Tan, *Zhongguo gudai ditu* vol. 7, 72-73.

<sup>64</sup> In Xianzhang’s *nianpu*, the account taken from the local gazetteer covering the year of 1449 also states that the Huang Suyang rebels were causing great disturbances in the Guangdong region. The Ming state sent a number of commanders and ministers to try to quell the rebels but was to no avail. Chen, *nianpu*, 13; Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章, *Chen Xianzhang ji* 陳獻章集 [Collected Writings of Chen Xianzhang], punctuated Sun Tonghai 孫通海 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 1.15.

<sup>65</sup> Although, Huang was not the only rebel leader active in the region at the time. For instance, the coastal areas of Southeastern and Southern China were under constant threats by rebels led by Ye Zongliu 葉宗留 (d. 1448) in the Qingyuan 慶元 area of Zhejiang, and Deng Maoqi 鄧茂七 (d. 1449) of Fujian 福建. These rebels would cross into adjacent provinces to raid and sack villages. Chen Xianzhang’s early active years in Guangdong as an educator and an intellectual were basically engulfed by these tumultuous events.

were making their passage to the city difficult, Mr. Lu argued with the guards and said: “The city guards are [supposed to be] protective of the people. Now that the people are in need. It is best to quickly arrange [them to get to safety]. Why are you rejecting them?” Not long afterward, the Huang rebels suddenly arrived and besieged the city for at least ten days. The coastal areas were in turmoil. The Ming state released a statement to call for the surrender of those who joined the rebels. Mr. Lu then sent men to the areas where those rebels frequently appear and explain to them their gains and losses in this situation. He was able to convince the some of the people who have joined the rebels to follow him back. Therefore, many of them [the people who have joined the rebels] were able to escape from the disaster of battles [such as deadly injuries]. The people [of Xinhui] are still grateful for his help to this day.

正統間，民虞黃賊之患將至，挈所有赴城，老幼扶攜。塞路守關者，為不便於民。公力爭止之，曰：「城守所以扞民，民有急宜早為之所，奈何拒之？」既而賊奄至城下，圍旬日不解，瀕海騷然。官出榜招諭民之從賊者，公使人於常所往還之地，曉以利害所在，使民趨避之不疑。由是得免於兵患，人至今德之。<sup>66</sup>

The details Xianzhang provided about the Huang rebels' rampages in these writings, although in retrospective, demonstrated the amount of attention he had dedicated to and the level of his concern with the Guangdong region.

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<sup>66</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 82-83.

Evidently, the three years in the capital strengthened Chen Xianzhang's self-perception as a Cantonese and changed Xianzhang's perception of the central state. In 1451, Chen Xianzhang ended his three-year long study at the Imperial Academy and returned home to Guangdong. After returning to Guangdong, Chen Xianzhang immediately commenced the establishment of an academy for local students in Xinhui.<sup>67</sup> His dedication to this plan was also unambiguous, as Chen Xianzhang described himself as "determined to devote [himself] to education."<sup>68</sup>

Chen Xianzhang began his time of lecturing students in his private academy at the foothills of the Xiaolu Mountain in Xinhui in 1452. He quickly built a reputation as the preeminent Confucian educator in southern Guangdong. This period of his life was marked by his active involvement in developing his private academy in Xinhui and his building of a personal network with Guangdong officials. This period also provided many examples that would contradict the assumption held by previous scholarship that Chen Xianzhang was disinterested in local affairs.<sup>69</sup> His actions since his return to Xinhui from Beijing not only demonstrated that he had local concerns in mind, he was also dedicated to establishing a culture of private academies in Guangdong, which was never in existence before.

Chen Xianzhang, while lecturing in his academy at the Xiaolu Mountain, was extremely active in commencing his endeavors in building his network with the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>68</sup> 「設帳授徒，志道向學。」 Ibid., 14.

<sup>69</sup> Chen Yufu, *Jiangmen xueji* 江門學記, 3.

provincial officials. At the time, the local government's incompetence in dealing with the rebels and containing the scale of the violence was greatly concerning. With regards to the violence caused by the rebels and the local government's inability to contain the rebels, many disturbing details can be found. An account contained in one Guangdong local gazetteer provided some gruesome facts:

[During] spring, the previously quelled rebels became active again. The Censor-in-Chief Ma Ang 馬昂 (1399 – 1476) then again sent Regional Military Commissioner [of Guangdong] Xu Gong 徐恭 (fl. 1450 – 1460), Assistant Administration [of the Military] Commissioner Zhu Ying 朱英 (1417 – 1485), deputy Gu Kan 顧侃 to [lead soldiers] to personally see the rebels to be arrested. Yet, the various officials were simply repeating old mistakes [and were unable to catch any of rebels]. As a result, officials could only send men to Xinhui to demand the surrender of the rebels. Meanwhile, the rebels were again able to raid and ransack villages, killing more than sixty villagers. As the District Magistrate also wanted the soldiers [of the central government] gone, he hid the killings and pretended he knew nothing about it.

春，前賊復作，都御史馬昂復遣都指揮徐恭、參議朱英、副使顧侃等親擒捕，各官猶踵前失，惟往新會城遣人招撫。間眾賊復剽掠鄉村，殺害村民六十餘口，縣令亦欲息兵，竟匿不聞。<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 16.



The provincial government's incompetence was clearly on displayed here. The account of the incident continued to provide more details:

[Therefore] the various officials [at the provincial level] was unaware of the situation. They then arrived to the strongholds of the rebels and demanded for their surrender. [The outnumbered troops] were humiliatingly played by the rebels, who showed no fear of the troops. Even when [some of the rebels] agreed to surrender, not long afterward, they would engage in raiding the villages again. Within the ten months from Spring to Winter, the provincial troops went back and forth between counties and villages in circular motion, but all five groups of rebels, who agreed to surrender initially, defected almost immediately afterward. The commoners [continued] to be tortured by the rebels, and the troops continued to relentlessly go after the rebels but to no avail. Therefore, the [provincial government of Guangdong and Guangxi] decided to embark on an expedition campaign against the rebels. On the second day of December, the Military Commander Weng Xin (b. 1433) led the three commissioners of military, civil administration, and justice to direct the provincial army of Guangdong, which was stationed in Xinhui.

各官不知，又親抵巢招撫，由是縣賊狎玩，略無畏忌，受招未幾，旋復剽掠。自春至冬十月之間，官兵往返縣鄉旋招叛者五。人民荼毒，官府疲於奔命，勢不能已。於是官兵大圖征討，十二月初二日都督翁信率三司等官統廣東軍駐新會。<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 16.

With a military operation of this scale, its impact on the local society was definitely significant. The number of troops alone posed a serious problem to maintaining order. With over a hundred thousand troops and over four thousands battle ships and cargo ships stationed in various places in Guangdong, the Cantonese people must have been anxious.<sup>72</sup>

Chen Xianzhang, on the other hand, was well-aware of the military operations and the possible implication. In fact, judging from his collection of writings, it is highly probable that Chen saw the presence of the provincial officials in Xinhui as an opportunity to assert his influence as a locally respected intellectual and started get acquainted with several high ranking officials in the Guangdong provincial government who was in charge of the massive military campaign. For instance, the deputy to the Regional Military Commissioner, Zhu Ying, was a personal friend of Chen Xianzhang since that time. In the *nianpu*, there was a brief account about Zhu Ying visiting Chen Xianzhang's studio during his time stationed in Xinhui.<sup>73</sup> And throughout Chen's collected writings, numerous correspondences between Zhu and Chen can be found.<sup>74</sup> One of them gave some details about their enduring friendship:

Recently, I have heard that you are now in charge [of the province] in the county of Cangwu 蒼梧. In these dozen years, [I appreciate] your concern of me. It was indeed my wish to see that your earnestness about our friendship has remained the

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<sup>72</sup> 「官軍士兵計一十餘萬，戰船及運糧船隻共四千餘艘。」 *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 16.

<sup>73</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 807.

<sup>74</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.123-126.

same as when we met in the halls [in Guangzhou] and discussed matters the entire day. This is what I had wished for, all I had wished for. You possess the heroic talent that is unmatched in this generation, and have the ability to make [Guangdong] a prosperous region for the hundred year to come. Therefore, [I had confident in you] when I learned about that you have been promoted by the emperor as the Grand Coordinator of Guangdong, and was granted the imperial edict to supervise the entire army of the region to manage this province.

頃者，獲拜執事於蒼梧<sup>75</sup>。十餘年間，執事之心不忘乎僕，與僕願見執事之誠交慰並沃於一堂之上，一日之間，至矣，盡矣。執事負一世之豪才，際百年之嘉會，故能受知當宁，進位都憲<sup>76</sup>，奉璽書，督三軍，以經營一方。<sup>77</sup>

Zhu Ying would remained one of Chen's closest and strongest allies in Guangdong, as Zhu would eventually be promoted as the Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi (*liangguang zongdu* 兩廣總督).<sup>78</sup> In one occasion Zhu Ying even provided Xianzhang's academy with food and grain.<sup>79</sup> At the very least, it is certain that Chen Xianzhang's personal network in the upper echelon of the provincial government was quickly developing.

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<sup>75</sup> Cangwu was the seat of the *liangguang* government, led by the Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi ditu* vol. 7, 72-73.

<sup>76</sup> Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 473.

<sup>77</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.123-124.

<sup>78</sup> *Mingshi*, 180.4740-4741.

<sup>79</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.124.

Besides Zhu Ying, Chen Xianzhang was also a close acquaintance with at least two other important political figures in Guangdong and at least one prominent figure in the central government. Those acquaintances of him included the Deputy District Magistrate of Xinhui at the time, Tao Lu 陶魯 (d. 1498), the Left Provincial Administrative Commissioner of Guangdong (*zou buzhen sishi* 左布政司使), Peng Shao 彭韶 (1430 – 1495), and the powerful Grand Secretary, Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447 – 1516).<sup>80</sup> Among them, Chen Xianzhang perhaps worked the most closely with Tao Lu for the longest period of time. In one account, Tao Lu is portrayed as a firm patron of local schools in Guangdong and a strong supporter of Chen Xianzhang:

[Tao Lu] was skilled at controlling officers and troops and always planned before striking. Throughout his forty-five years of service, he was never away from military operations. He has participated in battles, both large and small in scale, by the dozens, beheaded more than twenty-one thousand captives, and pacified those who sought to return to their original occupations, a the total of more than one hundred and thirty-seven thousand. The people of Guangdong relied on him as if he was the Great Wall. Every time after he had successfully quelled the rebels, he would set up a county academy for civilizing the local people. Tao Lu revered Chen Xianzhang, while Xianzhang also put Tao Lu in a place of respect.

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<sup>80</sup> A series of letters were exchanged between Chen and these individuals over a long time span. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.121-130.

善撫士卒，謀定而後動，歷官四十五年，始終不離兵事，大小數十戰，斬馘二萬一千有奇，安撫復業者十三萬七千有奇，廣人倚為長城。每平賊，率置縣學，與教化。敬禮白沙先生。白沙先生亦重之。<sup>81</sup>

Tao Lu's biography in the *Mingshi* attests to his support of local education in Guangdong: "with [Tao Lu] managing the rebel situations, it involved civilizing them first. When that method failed, then he killed them. Every time [Tao Lu] was able to quell rebels, he would establish new local schools to civilize the area" (治寇賊，化之為先，不得已始殺之耳。每平賊，率置縣建學以興教化).<sup>82</sup>

Chen Xianzhang's network continued to grow as he remained active in both teaching and getting involved in local politics at the same time. His influence on local officials was also getting stronger. An exchange between him and Tao Lu, as well as one of his letters to another Guangdong official, Xu Hong 徐紘 (fl. 1490), provided sufficient evidence. The exchange between Chen Xianzhang and Tao Lu took place sometime before Tao Lu's promotion to the position of Surveillance Commissioner of the Regional Military of the entire Huguang region 湖廣.<sup>83</sup> In their conversation, Tao Lu expressed his view of using discretion (*quan* 權) in applying his authority as an official and sought Chen's advice.<sup>84</sup> Tao Lu said to Chen Xianzhang:

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<sup>81</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 23; *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1.40.

<sup>82</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2:130; *Mingshi*, 165.4464-4465.

<sup>83</sup> Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 103; Hu Guang 湖廣 region included today's Hunan province, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces during the mid-Ming. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi ditu* vol. 7, 72-73.

<sup>84</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1.40.

To practice the way of the Sages, there are two kinds of procedure. One of them is the internal procedure of [cultivating] the *xin* 心 (mentality), and the other is the external procedure of exercising your authority with discretion. If one is without the mentality of the Sages, then his exercising of his authority is merely acting for his own desire and interest; on the other hand, if one merely possesses the mentality of the Sages, but lacks the discretion when using authority, he has nowhere to put his sagely mentality to use.

行聖人之道有二術，內之曰心，外之曰權。無其心則權為挾私妄作矣；無其權雖有其心將安施哉？<sup>85</sup>

Chen Xianzhang responded to Tao with a poem, which emphasized the importance of cultivating the local community in Tao's capacity as an official:

With ten thousand worth of gold, one may discuss buying a neighborhood; with a thousand worth, one may discuss buying a house. Isn't this because one had his sons and grandsons in mind? So that he labors himself day and night. Before coming to take up my post in Baisha, I have been humbling myself in the capital. Why does one have to manage a vast territory? I occupy merely one spot. My neighbors' music had entertained me for long until now, as I recollect the past in my garden. My intention is to choose the most enjoyable place to live, without the thought of leaving.

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<sup>85</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 23.

萬金論買鄰，千金論買宅。豈不念子孫，而以營朝夕。長揖都會里，來趨白沙役。壤地何必廣，吾其寄一席。鄰曲彌樂今，園林尚懷昔。吾志在擇善，無然復離析。<sup>86</sup>

The poem expressed Chen Xianzhang's belief in his purpose of serving Guangdong in his capacity as an intellectual and an educator, even when all he "managed" was no more than a small private academy. He considered Guangdong as a home for his sons and grandsons and had no intention of leaving the area, despite he possessed the resources of moving northward to a more politically and economically relevant region.<sup>87</sup>

In Chen Xianzhang's letter to Xu Hong, his message was much more straightforward. In the letter, Chen Xianzhang discussed the origin of the rebels in Guangdong and urged Xu to invest more support in local education:

For I have seen in our county in recent years, rebels are growing in numbers by the day. And the subsequent litigations are growing more entangling. The custom of our people is deteriorating. However, there is no intervention from the government. The general decency of the people is declining day by day. And no chance of improvement can be seen on the horizon. Therefore, how can, Your Excellency, not speak to those who realizes the origin of this turmoil?

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<sup>86</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 3.293.

<sup>87</sup> Chen's emphasis on his local concerns further resonates with Thomas Lee's observation in his book chapter on private academies and their relationship with the state in *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*. Lee has argued that private academies, although not entirely "localist," certainly had local interests in mind, as their purpose was to serve the local communities. Even if Chen and Tao Lu were not proactively promoting a Cantonese identity or a Cantonese "way" independent of the central state's "common" way, their commitment to establish private academies that catered to local needs undoubtedly made significant impact on the development of Cantonese identity among the educated elite in Guangdong for generations. Thomas H. C. Lee, "Academies: Official Sponsorship and Suppression," in *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*, ed. Frederick P. Brandauer and Chun-chieh Huang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 127-131.

切見本縣近年以來，盜賊日生，訟牒日繁，人情放濫，略無檢束，風俗惟見日不如前矣，未聞有反復之機。於乎，安得賢守令識理亂之源者與語是耶？

Chen Xianzhang was advocating for a long-term solution, that is the enhancement of local education through schools and private academies. In order to improve the local people's awareness of the "wickedness" of the rebels and to make Guangdong a place of civilization, Chen Xianzhang suggested:

Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032 – 1085) said: "The foundation of ruling the nation with the people having the right attitude and customs is to educate students to be talented and virtuous." Since the Qin and the Han, when speaking of ruling the nation, the Three Sage Kings are always considered as the pinnacle. What kind of kings was the Three Sage Kings? What was their way of ruling and civilizing? If you want to restore that civilization, where do you begin? It must be as Cheng Hao said: it can only be restored through the ways of the Three Sage Kings. However, it is a shame that their ways are not seen in our time. [Therefore] I urge your Excellency to govern [Guangdong] with great understanding and exercise your power with practicality in mind. Then you will, if fortunate, restore the people's positive attitude and establish a lasting foundation for our nation's peace and security. You must not act like the careerists that devote their mind to merely meeting the minimum standard of bureaucratic paperwork. They only care about what is in front of them at the moment. From now on, every one of your orders and policies must comply with the goal of restoring the proper custom of the people, after repeated consultation with those of us who concern about the issue. This is indeed the principle rule for any governing officials. And [if this is done]



Guangdong would indeed be a solid foundation for [cultivating] grand plans for managing [order in] the entire empire.

程子曰：「治天下以正風俗，得賢才為本。」秦漢以下，論天下之治者，必以復三代之為至。三代之君，何君也？其政教何政教也？苟欲復之，從何處下手耶？必如明道先生之言，是真能復三代之手段也。而不見用於時，惜哉！伏惟大賢為政，務實而行，庶幾能順復人情，為國家樹立長治久安之根本。非如俗吏，其所用心者，惟簿書期會，取辦於目前而已也。自今而往，一令之下，一政之行，必求其有關於風俗者三致意焉。是誠聽訟理人之第一義也，是誠經綸天下之實地也。<sup>88</sup>

Chen Xianzhang's suggestions and his influence proved to be significant. After Chen Xianzhang's advocacy for local schools and private academies, the Guangdong provincial government established a number of state-sponsored local schools, and helped construct and restore a number of private academies, including a local school and a Temple of Culture (*Wenmaio* 文廟) in Chengxiang 程鄉, Guangdong; restored the Wuzhou Academy in Wuzhou 梧州, Guangxi; and constructed two new academies in Enping 恩平 and Dianbai 電白, Guangdong, and a Fengcai Tower 風采樓 in Shaozhou 韶州, Guangdong, for hosting large lectures.<sup>89</sup> In combination with Chen Xianzhang's second private academy, Chunyang tai 春陽台 (Chunyang Tower or Terrace), and the original Xiaolu Studio, at least seven different local institutions were constructed in

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<sup>88</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.147-148.

<sup>89</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1.26-40.

southern Guangdong and Guangxi as a direct result of Xianzhang's efforts.<sup>90</sup> This was only the beginning of the emergence of waves of local schools and private academies in Lingnan in the ensuing decades.<sup>91</sup>

Chen's presence and his private academy's rising reputation certainly had an effect on the provincial government's establishment of local schools. In fact, Chen's reputation as an expert in establishing private academies even attracted the attention of officials from other provinces. In 1481, when the local government of Jiangxi restored the Academy of the White Deer Grotto, officials of Jiangxi even extended an invitation to Chen Xianzhang to offer him the position of lead-lecturer of the academy.<sup>92</sup> However, Chen Xianzhang declined the offer on the basis that he had already had a well-established audience base in Guangdong. Xianzhang's private academy in Xinhui essentially served as a model for the local schools and private academies that followed.<sup>93</sup> In this process of building new local schools in the area, Chen Xianzhang's influence was undeniable.<sup>94</sup> As

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<sup>90</sup> Chen Xianzhang had written extensively about his trips to the various academies in Guangdong and Guangxi. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1.26-41.

<sup>91</sup> Assistant Superintendent of Education of Guangxi, Yao Mo 姚模 (1465 – 1537), was inspired by Chen Xianzhang in constructing the Xuancheng Academy 宣成書院 in Guangxi. Li Zong 李中 (fl. 1514), while serving as the Assistant Administrative Commissioner of Guangdong and the Deputy Superintendent of Education of Guangxi, established the Wujing Academy 五經書院 there. Chen Xianzhang's contemporary, Wu Tingju 吳廷舉 (b. 1465) also helped restore the abandoned state-sponsored local academies and private academies in Shunde 順德 while serving as the county's magistrate. *Mingshi*, 201.5277, 5361-5362, 5309.

<sup>92</sup> Jian Youwen, *Baishazi yanjiu*, 174.

<sup>93</sup> According to Chen Xianzhang's *nianpu*, in 1474, he was given a fund to build a new residence. Instead of using the money to renovate his quarters, Chen used it to maintain his private academies in Guangdong so that he can maintain the visit of the scholars and students from all over China. Chen Yufu, *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 47.

<sup>94</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1.18.

an educator who was trained at the preeminent Imperial Academy, Chen Xianzhang understood the importance of developing a viable model of private academies that would specifically meet the needs of the Guangdong region. However, there was no other experienced scholars in Guangdong who were familiar with coordinating local schools and private academies.<sup>95</sup> As a result, Chen Xianzhang decided to travel to Wu Yubi's academy in Jiangxi to study with Wu.

Wu Yubi's influence on Chen Xianzhang would prove to be significant. Wu Yubi's unique style of teaching, which was most prominently marked by his teaching of practical skills to his students, such as farming, was of great interest to Xianzhang. Several accounts in a number of sources provided detailed accounts about Wu Yubi's style. Known as a dedicated and rigorous teacher, Wu Yubi's only extant written work, *Rilu* 日錄 [Daily Records],<sup>96</sup> provided a valuable glimpse into the daily activities at his academy:

[Chen Xianzhang] Baisha travelled from Guangdong to study with Wu Yubi.

[Daily,] when the first ray of morning light appeared, Wu Yubi would begin winnowing the grain. And yet, Baisha (Xianzhang) would still be in bed. Wu

Yubi then shouted: "If a student is lazy, then how could he reach the doorsteps of

Cheng Yi in the future? How could he reach the doorsteps of Mencius himself?"

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<sup>95</sup> "[I had my] doors tightly shut, for I was entirely devoted to seeking a proper way to study [and teach]. I was without the guidance of teachers and friends, so I could only seek it in books and manuscripts. [During that time] I often forgot to sleep and eat. And this state of being continued for a year. I ultimately had no success." 「杜門不出，專求所以用力之方。既無師友指引，自惟靠書冊尋之，忘寢忘食，如是者累年而卒未得焉。」 Ibid., 21.

<sup>96</sup> The *Rilu*, unfortunately, no longer exists as a standalone literature. The only edition of it is recorded, most likely in its incomplete form, in Huang Zongxi's *Mingru xuean*, 1.15.

陳白沙自廣來學。晨光纔辨，吳氏手自簸穀，而白沙未起。乃大聲曰：「秀才若為懶惰，即他日何從到伊川門下？何從到孟子門下？」<sup>97</sup>

Wu Yubi was known to have a tendency to constantly laboring himself and his students over cultivating grain fields at his academy as a kind of lecturing about important Confucian ideas. Although he rarely lectured on the Confucian Classics, his students at least seemed to be appreciative of their teacher's teaching style, as stated in a passage in Wu Yubi's *Rilu*:

[Wu Yubi] lived in the countryside and was committed to personally tilling the fields and consuming what he had planted himself. His students and followers were numerous. Master Yubi said that Lou Liang 婁諒 (1422 – 1491) was truthful and honest, Yang Jiechun 楊傑淳 (fl. ?) graceful, Zhou Wen 周文 (fl. ?) courageous. Even in the rain, Wu Yubi would be wearing his straw raincoat and rain-hat, carrying his plough and plowshare, and working the fields with the students. What he said was that all the nuances about the hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* 易經 can be seen through the ploughs and plowshares in our hands. 居鄉躬耕食力，弟子從游者甚眾。先生謂婁諒確實，楊傑淳雅，周文勇邁。雨中被蓑笠，負耒耜，與諸生並耕，談乾坤及坎、離、艮、震、兌、巽於所耕之耒耜可見。<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Chen Xianzhang *nianpu*, 16.

<sup>98</sup> *Mingru xuean*, 1.15.

Meanwhile, Chen Xianzhang's biographical summary (*xingzhuang* 行狀), written by his student Zhang Xu 張翀 (1454-1514), also briefly illustrated Xianzhang's interaction with Wu Yubi:

Wu Yubi was severe and persistent in his personality. Typically, he does not speak regularly with those who come to study with him. What he would do is to tell them to till the fields. Yet, it was only to Chen Xianzhang that Wu Yubi took a different approach. He would constantly discuss things with Xianzhang.

康齋性嚴毅，來學者絕不與言，先令治田，獨先生有異，朝夕與之講究。<sup>99</sup>

The experience of studying with Wu Yubi clearly had a significant impact on Chen Xianzhang. Later, when Xianzhang himself recollected his time with Wu, he shared with his students that:

Listening to [Wu Yubi's] lectures, [the curriculum covered everything] from Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017 – 1073), the Cheng brothers, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020 – 1077), and Zhu Xi to Confucius's teachings when he was in the land of Zhu 洙 and Si 泗.<sup>100</sup> His lectures emphasized on respecting the Way of the masters, becoming courageous about bearing responsibility and duties [to the society], and forging oneself to be indomitable and unyielding, just like standing on a cliff above a thousand *ren* 仞. He was indeed a formidable man of this era.

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<sup>99</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 869.

<sup>100</sup> The Zhu and Si are the two rivers that flow through Qufu 曲阜, Shandong, where Confucius came from.

聞其論學，由濂洛關閩以上達洙泗，尊師道，勇擔荷，不屈不撓，如立千仞之壁，蓋一代人豪也。<sup>101</sup>

From the accounts provided by the various individuals above, it is quite clear that Wu Yubi had a distinctive style of teaching by which Xianzhang was heavily influenced. Wu Yubi's hallmark approach of teaching practical skills to students was adopted by Chen Xianzhang in his academies later. In 1455, when Chen Xianzhang returned to Guangdong after studying with Wu in Jiangxi for a year, Chen brought back to Xinhui with him the valuable experience of "practical learning" from Wu's academy.

Chen Xianzhang's appreciation for Wu Yubi's influence was evident. He credited Wu Yubi as his source of inspiration for the rest of his life in this passage from his collected writings.

When I was a young man, I did not have any good teachers and friends. Therefore I was unable to learn in a proper way and was submerged in the pursuit of fame and wealth. I have long been drifting in things that were trivial. By the time when I was 30 years of age, I was finally able to abandon my pursuit of examination success and to study with Wu Yubi. It was then that I realized I had not drifted too far away from the proper way. When thinking of my faulty past, I am more convinced today that I am on the correct path, for I have taken what are not essential, swept it with the high wind [of rectification], and swung it in the great waves [of purification], in fear that the roots [of faulty pursuits] might grow again.

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<sup>101</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 17.

予少無師友，學不得其方，汨沒於聲利，支離於糝糠者蓋久之。年幾三十，始盡棄舉子業，從吳聘君遊，然後歎迷途之未遠，覺今是而昨非，取向所汨沒而支離者，洗之以長風，蕩之以大波，惴惴焉惟恐其苗之復長也。<sup>102</sup>

Chen Xianzhang's role in the larger trend of revitalization of local academies during the mid-Ming, therefore, can be considered as somewhat of an early adopter of a new style of teaching that was primarily action-oriented. As it was illustrated in his *nianpu*, Chen Xianzhang told his students repeatedly that practical skills were ultimately what would truly be part of them, and that they must realize true learning is more than just book learning. He told them:

The most valuable [lesson learned] from studying is [learning how] to internalize what was learned [through practice]. After one internalized it, then he could seek references in the various books. [When this is accomplished] what the books and scriptures said are simply one with my words. Otherwise, the contents of the books are still by themselves, and I am by myself.”

學貴自得也。自得之，然後博之載籍，則典籍之言，我之言也。否則典籍自典籍，而我自我也。<sup>103</sup>

Another one of Chen Xianzhang's documented practical curriculum was archery lessons. It was ironically recorded in an account of an event that would pull Chen Xianzhang into another political battle. Nonetheless, the event marked his transition to the next chapter of his life. The account suggests that Xianzhang:

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<sup>102</sup> Chen Xianzhang *nianpu*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

Gathered students to practice archery whenever he was not lecturing his students. Rumors were circulating everywhere in Guangdong and were accusing Chen Xianzhang of gathering an army to plot against the Ming state. Everyone in his circle felt the imminent danger resulting from the rumors about him. Yet, Xianzhang was acting as if nothing was happening. At the time, the District Magistrate of Shunde 順德, the Hanlin Academic and the tutor for the Heir Apparent, Qian Pu 錢溥 (1408 – 1488), appreciated the ability and reputation of Xianzhang. He advised Xianzhang to travel north to the capital [in order to show loyalty to the central government] as a way to protect himself, and on the other hand ease the worries of Xianzhang's mother. Xianzhang ultimately agreed and therefore travelled north to the Imperial Academy again.

與門人講學之暇，習射。流言四起，誣以聚兵謀反。眾皆危之，而先生處之泰然，行若無事。時順德令翰林侍讀學士錢溥，夙雅重先生，勸晉京，勿貽太夫人憂，亦明哲保身之道。先生然之，遂北上，重遊太學。

Given the tumultuous experience that the people of Guangdong underwent during the rebels rampages, Chen Xianzhang's archery lessons for his students were likely a precautionary measure against future rebel raids. However, in 1466, Xianzhang's archery lessons attracted unnecessary attention. Chen Xianzhang and his students were being accused of engaging in "rebellious activities."<sup>104</sup> As a result of this incident, Chen Xianzhang was advised by his acquaintance in the provincial government to travel north

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<sup>104</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 31.



to pay a tribute of loyalty to the imperial court in order to clear his name. This trip would be the beginning of a new chapter of his life.

In contrast to previous assumptions about Chen Xianzhang, it seems that Chen Xianzhang's time with Wu Yubi was anything but "unfruitful" and "in vain."<sup>105</sup> At the very least, Chen's style of practical teaching had garnered a considerable group of students and admirers in Guangdong that some officials deemed Chen would be a potential threat to the state. At this point, it is also clear that another previously asserted assumption about Chen Xianzhang being merely a poet-philosopher, who was mostly concerned with addressing abstract ideas and refrained from getting involved in local politics, is inaccurate. Chen Xianzhang's choice of friends and his deliberate efforts in establishing a personal network among Guangdong officials were the best evidence in support of the fact that he was deeply involved in local politics.

In summary, Chen Xianzhang was far more sophisticated as an intellectual than many have assumed. His personal experience from the period of 1448 to 1455 demonstrated that he was a pioneer in revitalizing private academies and educational institutions in Guangdong, while establishing a culture of private academies in the region. He was also highly active in developing his network of friends in the provincial government of Guangdong and was very much involved in local politics. From 1455

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<sup>105</sup> Chen Yufu pointed out that several accounts of Xianzhang's time at Wu Yubi's academy indicated that the experience did not yield any benefit to Xianzhang's intellectual development, including writings by Xianzhang himself and others who knew Xianzhang. In Xianzhang's own writing, he explained that he "did not know the way [into Wu Yubi's thinking]" 未知入處. Scholar in the early Qing, Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630 – 1696), also stated in his *Guangdong xinyu* 廣東新語 [New Essays on Guangdong] that "when Baisha (Xianzhang) was at Wu Yubi's academy, he served Yubi for several months, yet did not dare to seek help from Yubi" (白沙之於吳聘君，為之執役數月，而不敢請益). *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 16-18.

onward, with a rising reputation, Chen Xianzhang's views on state affairs, education, and the Confucian way of life became more frequently sought after. From 1455 to his death in 1500, this period was marked by his struggle at the national level with scholar-officials from the north and his effort in asserting his influence on the larger Confucian community in general. Chen Xianzhang, as the first and only Guangdong native to be enshrined in the Confucian Temple, would embarked on a journey that ultimately led him not only to national prominence but also to immortality as an enshrined Confucian. His triumphs and struggles would offer a valuable and important insight into the Ming political world.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHEN, HU, AND WANG YANGMING: THE EMERGENCE OF *JIANGHUI* CULTURE

With Chen Xianzhang being accused of “gathering troops,” he was asked to travel north to the capital to show his loyalty to the Ming court.<sup>106</sup> For the safety of his family and himself, Chen Xianzhang agreed to travel to Beijing to “revisit the Imperial Academy.”<sup>107</sup> Chen Xianzhang’s first problem quickly revealed itself shortly upon his arrival at the capital. The Headmaster of the Imperial Academy, Xing Rang 邢讓 (1427-?), brought Chen Xianzhang’s ability and credential into question. He publically asked Xianzhang to discuss his education background and his personal intellectual journey.<sup>108</sup> Xing Rang’s request was obviously targeting Chen Xianzhang’s lack of a *jinshi* degree, for examination success was an important measure of merit at the time.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> This event was mentioned earlier. Judging from the overreaction by those accusing Chen Xianzhang of gathering troops, Xianzhang’s archery lessons were likely had been going on for years. *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 31.

<sup>107</sup> 「重遊太學。」 Ibid., 31.

<sup>108</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 869; *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 32.

<sup>109</sup> Examination success had always been one of the most important indication and measurement of merit in traditional Chinese society. Traditionally, a scholar-official’s “worthiness” was determined based on three factors: merits (*gong* 功), exegetical production (*yan* 言), and virtue (*de* 德). As early as in the *Commentary of Zuo* 左傳, these three factors have been mentioned as the standard for measuring greatness. In one of the conversations between Shusun Bao 叔孫豹 (d. ca. 538 B.C.) of the Dukedom of Lu 魯國 and Fan Xuanzi 范宣子 (fl. ca. 547 B.C.) of the Dukedom of Jin 晉國 in the year of 547 B.C., Shusun Bao told Fan Xuanzi:

As I have heard, the greatest of all is the establishment of virtue, then the establishment of merits, and finally the establishment of exegetical writings (or in this case, literary production). Even when time has long passed, they will not diminish. This is what is truly incorruptible.

豹聞之，大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言。雖久不廢，此之為不朽。

Since its institutionalization in the Sui 隋 dynasty (581-617), the civil service examination had been instrumental in providing students opportunities to establish their merit. During the Song dynasty (960-1279), the examination system’s general framework and format were established in its final form, with extensive essay questions on the interpretation of the Confucian Classics. After centuries and many modifications to people’s perception and definition of the three factors, examination success, or more

Undoubtedly, Xing Rang felt that the issue was significant enough for him to address it openly. For the aspiring students at the Imperial Academy and the scholar-officials attending the event that day, they surely hoped to hear Chen Xianzhang's explanation as well.<sup>110</sup> After all, their shared identity as an elite was tightly tied to their shared experience in the examinations.<sup>111</sup> For them to accept someone without a *jinshi* degree as a legitimate scholar was certainly difficult.<sup>112</sup>

As Lü Miao-fen has also pointed out, the Chinese population grew tremendously during the Ming, and the number of students participating in the civil service

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precisely worded, the successful attainment of a *jinshi* degree, had become an integral part of measuring merit by Ming time. Li Zongtong 李宗桐 trans., *Chunqiu Zuochuan jinzhu jinyi* 春秋左傳今註今譯 [A Modern Annotation and Interpretation of the Commentary of Zuo] (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1971), 925; Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1279)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2; Benjamin Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 6, 13.

<sup>110</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 869.

<sup>111</sup> The scholar-officials' reliance on the examinations to identify each other's capability was well-documented. In the *Jin shi* 金史 [History of the Jin Dynasty], one of the memorials presented to the Jin emperor in 1192 by the Vice Grand Councilor (*Shenzhi zhengshi* 參知政事) Xu Chiguo 胥持國 (fl. 1192) provided some ideas about the tendency at the time: "as for the learning of examinations and education, people study its curriculum since a young age. When they are older, they fondle their meanings to make them capable of governing. It is through this way that talents are created" (是科蓋資教之術耳。夫幼習其文，長玩其義，使之莅政，人材出焉。). Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 517; Tuo Tuo 脫脫 (1314-1355), *Jin shi* 金史 [History of the Jin Dynasty] (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 51.1149-1150; Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 64.

<sup>112</sup> The educated elite of this time contributed their steadfast belief in measuring the merit of any Confucian intellectual by how successful the individual was in the examinations because it had always been the only measurable way to judge one's dedication and talent. As early as in the Southern Song, this has been the case. A quote from Zhu Xi perfectly illustrated that mentality: "when your sons are young, teach them how to compose poems and parallel lyrics; when they are older, they shall go off to take the examinations" (小兒子教他做詩對，大來便習舉子業。). Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子類語 [Classified Conversations of Master Zhu], ed., Li Jingde 黎靖德 (fl. 1270), punctuated, Wang Xingxian 王星賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 34.867.

examinations continued to grow tremendously every year.<sup>113</sup> With the annual quota of *jinshi* degrees remained the same in the Ming, however, obtaining a degree became increasingly difficult. The phenomenon led the Ming Confucian community to especially appreciate the talent of those with a *jinshi* degree. This attitude had largely remained the same during Chen Xianzhang's time.<sup>114</sup> Chen Xianzhang's battle for recognition, which was already an uphill one given his southern origin, seemed anything but optimistic. However, Chen Xianzhang was savvy enough to realize that he was given the opportunity to address the issue in front of some of the most promising young scholar-officials at the time. He resorted to another approach to establish his credential: to emphasize his record of serving the Guangdong region as an educator and his sacrifice of personal gain in those years.<sup>115</sup> Chen Xianzhang responded to Xing Rang:

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<sup>113</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren shequn* 陽明學士人社群 [The Wang Yang-ming School during the Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica, 2003), 39; John Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*, 113.

<sup>114</sup> Although intellectuals from earlier time periods have expressed criticism about this particular attitude, such as in this comment by Zhu Xi: “nowadays, talented people who aim for the examinations are gradually turning tender and soft, sensitive and deceiving. I am afraid that this is the result of the overall environment surrounding the examinations. Fine men might come out from the wilderness and the mountains” (今人材舉業浸纖弱尖巧，恐是風氣漸薄使然，好人或出於荒山中。). It continued to have an impact in the Ming. *Zhuzi yulei*, 2685. Moreover, Zhu Xi in the chapters of the “Method of Reading” (*dushufa* 讀書法) and *lixing* 力行 in the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [Classified Conversations of Master Zhu] also repeatedly criticized the uselessness of the examinations in cultivating one's “true leaning.” *Zhuzi yulei*, 108.191, 243-247.

<sup>115</sup> In the *Chunqiu Zuochuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 [Revisionist Interpretations of the Zuo Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals], an annotation by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574 – 648) during the Tang dynasty (618 – 907) provided the definition for merit (*gong* 功):

Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius can all be described as establishers of virtue. As for the establishment of merits, it is described as “rescuing [those in need] from distress and removing obstacles [for the people].” Those who have merit are the ones that have contributed to aiding the people in times of adversity. Therefore, Fu [Qian] 服虔 (fl. 127 – 200) and Du Yu 杜預 (222 – 285) considered Yu and Ji as so, and said the men of kind can be considered as establishers of merits.

禹、湯、文、武、周公與孔子皆可謂立德者也。立功，謂拯厄除難，功濟於時，故服、杜皆以禹、稷當之，言如此之類，乃是立功也。

I can endure hunger in planning for education and society, I can endure cold in thinking of planting mulberries.<sup>116</sup> I had extraordinary goals as a young man, seeking to sharpen myself ten thousand *li* up in the sky. I saw men of antiquity in my dreams and was moved to tears. My Way<sup>117</sup> indeed has an authority, long live Zhu Ziyang.<sup>118</sup> Never cease to speak of respectfulness, as it has shown me the way into the realm of virtue. Proper actions and personal gain are two different paths, the line separating them is extremely fine. It is not difficult to be convinced by the sagely learning.<sup>119</sup> [But] it is instrumental to secure the essence [of the sagely learning] in one's mind. The goodness in people has to be cultivated daily, so that one can be spared the torment of material desire. Morality and virtue are like fat and flesh, literature and words are merely rotten grain and rice chaff. Look up and down between heaven and earth; how magnificence is this body of sagely learning.

能飢謀藝稷<sup>120</sup>，冒寒思植桑。少年負奇氣，萬丈磨青蒼。夢寐見古人，慨然悲流光。吾道有宗主，千秋朱紫陽。說敬不離口，示我入德方。義利分兩

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Kong Yingda, *Chunqiu Zuochuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 [Revisionist Interpretations of the Zuo Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), 35.1152.

<sup>116</sup> The planting of mulberries here means caring for young children. As early as in the Han, Zhang Heng 張衡 (78 – 139) wrote in his “*Fu* of the South of the Metropolis” (Nandu fu 南都賦): “Carry out utmost filial piety to eternity, while thinking of the mulberry trees; Transcendent roams south, taking a look at his old home” (永世克孝，懷桑梓焉；真人南巡，睹舊里焉。).

<sup>117</sup> Likely referring to the Confucian tradition.

<sup>118</sup> A byname of Zhu Xi.

<sup>119</sup> Wicked men are referring to the rebels that were active in Guangdong.

<sup>120</sup> This *yi* 藝 here seems to be referring to the six arts of the gentlemen (*liu yi* 六藝).

途，析之極毫芒。聖學信匪艱，要在用心藏。善端日培養，庶免物慾戕。道德仍膏腴，文辭固粃糠。俯仰天地間，此身何昂藏。<sup>121</sup>

Chen Xianzhang's response was somewhat obscured by his poetic choice of words. However, the poem's response to Xing Rang's question about Chen's capability as someone without a *jinshi* degree was quite clear. Chen Xianzhang asserted that he remained a firm follower of the "sagely learning" (*shengxue* 聖學), even when his work in Guangdong in helping the provincial government to "civilize" the rebel-prone areas was difficult. His response was also essentially a response to the accusation against him about his archery lessons, for that incident was the main reason for his visit to the capital. In addition, Chen Xianzhang also responded to the criticism of lacking exegetical works on the Classics by saying that morality and virtue were the most important characteristics of any Confucian.

Xing Rang's reaction to Xianzhang's response was also remarkable, for he immediately praised Chen Xianzhang the next day at court as a "true Confucian" (*zhen ru* 真儒). In Xianzhang's *nianpu*, the account illustrates:

The Headmaster of the Imperial Academy, Xing Rang tested Xianzhang's literary ability with Yang Shi's 楊時 (1053-1135) poem entitled "Ci ri buzai de" (This Day No Longer Maintained) and was greatly amazed, and said: "Not even Yang Shi himself can match this." Xing Rang then publically lauded the ability of Xianzhang at court and claimed that Xianzhang was indeed a true Confucian

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<sup>121</sup> Chen Xianzhang *nianpu*, 32-33.

who is coming back to public life. Therefore, Xiangzhang's name took the capital by storm. Upon attending and listening to Xiangzhang's discussion, Supervising Secretary He Qin 賀欽 (1437-1510) immediately presented his resignation directly to the emperor and committed to serving Xiangzhang as a student. After Xiangzhang returned to Guangdong, the number of scholars and students visiting Xiangzhang from all over China increased day by day.

祭酒邢讓試和楊時此日不再得詩一篇，驚曰：「龜山不如也。」颺言於朝，以為真儒復出。由是名震京師。給事中賀欽聽其議論，即日抗疏解官，執弟子禮事獻章。獻章既歸，四方來學者日進。<sup>122</sup>

In this short account, the admiration people had for him is clearly demonstrated. Xing Rang, as the headmaster of the Imperial Academy, was undoubtedly someone who understood court politics and opinions within the Confucian circle. His comparison of Chen Xianzhang to Yang Shi, an important figure in the “Learning of the Way” movement in the Southern Song, carried great weight and illustrated the impact of Chen's presence on the larger Confucian community in the capital. It is clear that Chen Xianzhang made a strong impression on the scholar-officials in the capital during this trip. With the scholar-officials' recognition of Chen Xianzhang as a legitimate Confucian intellectual, Chen Xianzhang's trip to Beijing in 1466 helped restore his reputation as a “proper” Confucian and settled the accusations against him on the archery lesson incident.

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<sup>122</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 869.



In the meantime, the larger Confucian community was seeking for new ways to assert their influence on state affairs. As the Ming court grew more despotic during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the emperors became more alienated from the bureaucracy, the Confucian community became increasingly frustrated with the political establishment. Declining expectation for the prospect of serving in the bureaucracy fueled what can be described as the “localization of elite” during the mid-Ming, which would directly contribute to the thriving of private academies and eventually the emergence of the *jianghui* culture in the following decades.<sup>123</sup>

Non-degree holding intellectuals, such as Chen Xianzhang, who were not confined by the constraints of being a bureaucrat, offered an alternative path in which scholar-officials saw potential for new venues to discuss political issues without the risk of being punished at court. It might seem that the Confucian intellectuals during the mid-Ming were too cautious when going about their duty as court officials. However, given the brutality that was imposed upon scholar-officials throughout the early Ming, this level of caution was necessary.

After all, the Ming political culture was vastly different from that of the Song. In the Song, court politics was much more open to dissent and disagreement. Song’s founding emperor, Song Taizu 宋太祖 (927-976) specifically established a rule against the killing of ministers and remonstrating officials. The rule prohibited his successors

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<sup>123</sup> Lü Miao-fen, “Yangming xue jianghui,” 45-87.

from using excessive force on unyielding officials.<sup>124</sup> In this environment, the Song Confucian intellectuals developed the ideas of “sharing power with the emperor” (tongzhi tianxia 同治天下) and “treating the governance of the realm as a personal obligation” (以天下為己任).<sup>125</sup> Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) once elaborated on this notion: “being a ruler is only about choosing the most honest and wise to complete tasks for him.”<sup>126</sup> Zhu Xi also said the main function of the emperor was to “pick a wise person to be the chief minister.”<sup>127</sup> But the political environment in the Ming never reached the level of openness of the Song. Hostility and often brutality toward Confucian scholar-officials were constant hallmarks of Ming emperors.

This culture of brutality against Confucian intellectual started with the founding emperor of the Ming himself. As is widely known, the single most important precedent was set by the Taizu Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398). Ming Taizu’s genuine dislike and distrust of the educated elite, most prominently the Confucian scholar-officials, fueled his mentality of using harsh measures to punish officials whenever the officials voiced disagreement with him at the court. In Ming Taizu’s biography in the *Mingshi*, one of Taizu’s statement nakedly revealed his feelings about the Confucian scholar-officials:

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<sup>124</sup> 「不殺大臣及言事官。」Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue yu zhengzhi wenhua* 宋明理學與政治文化 [The Lixue Movement and Political Culture of the Song and the Ming] (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 2004), 250.

<sup>125</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 250.

<sup>126</sup> 「為人君者，苟能至誠任賢以成其功。」Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 244.

<sup>127</sup> 「用一箇好人作相」. Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 242.

As I drink from the golden cup with you, my sharpened blades will not spare you.

金盃同汝飲，白刃不相饒。<sup>128</sup>

Oftentimes, the punishments of scholar-officials were public and brutal.<sup>129</sup> A quote from the *Mingshi* illustrated the fear of the officials and the humiliation that they had suffered:

Since ancient time, *shi* considered serving in the government as scholar-officials as a pride and saw the dismissal from office as a disgrace. Yet, *shi* today see idling time away and staying hidden as a fortune and consider the refusal of government positions as bliss, as they know that the punishment of working in the fields and hard labor will be inevitable for them [if they serve in the government], and that the humiliation from being whipped and caned will be a common affair.

古之為士者，以登仕為榮，以罷職為辱。今之為士者，以溷跡無聞為福，以受玷不錄為幸，以屯田工役為必獲之罪，以鞭笞捶楚為尋常之辱。<sup>130</sup>

As evident, the treatment of Confucian scholar-officials was already more brutal than ever in the early Ming. Previous scholarship suggested a number of different hypothesis for Ming Taizu's erratic and cruel behavior. Most notably, Chan Hok-lam attributed Ming Taizu's paranoiac, violent behavior, self-willed and absolutist rule, and his indiscriminate purges of his ministers and scholars to his "illiterate" background.<sup>131</sup>

Nonetheless, one thing is certain about Zhu Yuanzhang: besides the immense value that

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<sup>128</sup> *Mingshi*, 120.3987.

<sup>129</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 254.

<sup>130</sup> *Mingshi*, 126.3991-3992.

<sup>131</sup> Chan Hok-lam, *Ming Taizu (r. 1368-98) and the Foundation of the Ming Dynasty in China* (Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2011), 2.

he saw in the Confucian ideal of social hierarchy as a political tool, he had little to no regard for the Confucian tradition.<sup>132</sup>

Even into the mid-Ming period, the culture of brutality set by the Ming Taizu still lingered. One can even argue that the treatment of scholar-officials at court had only gotten worse. According to the *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末 [Private Historical Record of the Events in the History of Ming], another example happened in 1509 illustrated clearly the fear and anxiety that some of the court officials had to deal with in order to survive:<sup>133</sup>

Wang Yunfeng served as the Chancellor of the National University, as a result of a recommendation by Minister Zhang Cai for his reputation. Not long after he was appointed [to the office], he wanted to insist on submitting his resignation. And he left behind a final note: The one who rules recites Taizu's words, 'in all the universe, those *shi* who cannot be used by me, must be killed and have their clans exterminated.' Yunfeng's father, the Grand Minister of Education, Zuo said: 'I am an old man, where will you put me to die?' Yunfeng wept as he departed.

以王雲鳳為國子祭酒，尚書張綏以人望起之。始被命，欲堅辭。及有遺書言：執政者誦太祖「寰中士夫不為吾用者當殺身滅家」語。雲鳳父大司徒佐曰：「吾老矣，汝置我何處死耶？」雲鳳泣就道。<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 264, 273.

<sup>133</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 255.

<sup>134</sup> Gu Yingtai 谷應泰, *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 29.649.

The personal grudge of Ming Taizu developed into a culture of fear and torture against the Confucian elite throughout the Ming dynasty. It was in this kind of overwhelmingly harsh environment that the Confucian community began to make gradual changes to their self-perceived purpose as intellectuals. Their new ideal of asserting influence, on the other hand, began to take on another form that was different from its root in the Song Confucian ideals of imperial-Confucian partnership. Essentially, the Ming ideal was transforming from the Song ideal of “sharing power with the emperor in governance” into a new core belief.

The idea of power sharing between the emperor and the Confucian scholar-officials had always been an important part of the Confucian ideal of social order since the Northern Song.<sup>135</sup> In the Song, due to the more open and lenient political environment, this ideal was exercised to a high degree in reality. On one occasion, even after the reformist Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) had engaged in an intense political debate with the Shenzong Emperor 宋神宗 (r. 1067 – 1085), no punishment was imposed on Wang.<sup>136</sup> However, under the despotism of the Ming emperors, out-spoken officials no longer enjoyed that immunity. The personal integrity of Confucian intellectuals during the Ming was essentially nonexistent. And the Song ideal of an imperial-Confucian partnership was doomed to fail from the beginning in the Ming.

As a result, the likes of Chen Xianzhang, who was considered as an outsider to the bureaucracy, offered plenty of inspiration to the frustrated Ming scholar-officials.

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<sup>135</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 271.

<sup>136</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 264.

Their dissatisfaction and fear motivated their decision to seek new alternative ways to express their opinions about the political establishment and assert their influence on policies. Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren emerged to the scene precisely at the right moment. Both Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren were accomplished Confucians in their respective geographical regions. Their model of building a base of influence at the regional level that was mostly autonomous from the central authority intrigued a good number of young officials to follow their approach. In Chen's case, Luo Lun 羅倫 (1431 – 1478), Zhang Mao 章懋 (1437 – 1522), Zhuang Chang 莊昶 (fl. 1466), and He Qin were among those who were particularly influenced by Chen Xianzhang's model.<sup>137</sup> Luo Lun, as the top ranked *jinshi* in 1466, resigned two years later after being transferred out of the capital for being too outspoken. He went back to Jiangxi and established his own private academy at Mt. Jinniu 金牛山 (Mt. Golden Ox).<sup>138</sup> After Zhang Mao was purged from his official position in the capital for remonstrating, he also established his private academy in Lanxi 蘭谿, Jinhua.<sup>139</sup> Zhuang Chang, after he was forced out of the capital as well, decided to went back to his native Jiangpu 江浦, Nanjing and open his own academy at Mt. Ding 定山 (the Peaceful Mountain).<sup>140</sup> All three individuals maintained long-term friendships with Xianzhang while commencing their own endeavors in their

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<sup>137</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 33.

<sup>138</sup> *Mingshi*, 179.4750.

<sup>139</sup> *Mingshi*, 179.4751-4752.

<sup>140</sup> *Mingshi*, 179.4754.

respective regions.<sup>141</sup> He Qin, while already serving in the promising position of Speaker of the Office of Scrutiny (*jishizhong* 給事中),<sup>142</sup> even immediately resigned after meeting with Chen Xianzhang in order to study under Chen as a student and to serve him as a personal attendant.<sup>143</sup> As for Hu Juren, his presence at the Academy of the White Deer Grotto continued to attract students to his tutelage.<sup>144</sup> His commitment to stay out of central politics despite invitations to join the bureaucracy served as a strong example to young officials as well, especially during this time of changes in the Confucian circle.<sup>145</sup>

Chen Xianzhang's presence in the capital in 1466 was proved influential and significant in terms of fueling the cultural changes among the Confucian elite. However, Chen seemed to have agitated some groups of officials in the capital in the process. During Chen Xianzhang's brief one year stay in the capital this time, officials were enthusiastic about sending their children to study with him. The Deputy Minister (*shilang* 侍郎) of the Ministry of Personnel at the time, Yin Min 尹旻 (fl. 1447), also decided to send his son over to join the flock. However, Chen Xianzhang, for unspecified reasons, turned down Yin's request at least six times. Chen's rejection of Yin Min's son greatly

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<sup>141</sup> Correspondences between them and Chen Xianzhang can be found in Chen Xianzhang's collected writings. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 2.156, 159.

<sup>142</sup> Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 133.

<sup>143</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 33; *Mingshi*, 283.7264-7265.

<sup>144</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang*, 176.

<sup>145</sup> *Mingshi*, 282.7232-7233.

enraged Yin. In the following year of 1467, Chen was released from his status as visiting scholar at the Imperial Academy and had to return home to Guangdong.<sup>146</sup>

After leaving the capital, Chen seemed at least satisfied with his accomplishments in this trip. His feeling was expressed in this poem written after his departure from Beijing:

Bending down humiliated or standing upright proudly will come and go, what do external things mean to me? How can it compare to simply laughing it off, taking lightly the world of men comes with true happiness.

屈伸榮辱自去來，外物於我何有哉。爭如一笑解其縛，脫屣人間有真樂。<sup>147</sup>

Obviously, Xianzhang was not bothered by his release from the Imperial Academy. And the only logical reason was that he was at ease with the result of this trip, which as indicated by the evidence provided, was remarkable.

Beginning in 1466, Chen Xianzhang became a frequent visitor to the Imperial Academy in the capital. Superficially, he would request to be allowed to stay in the capital for the examinations. However, his true reason to visit the Imperial Academy was to further solidify his presence as a preeminent intellectual in the larger Confucian circle. In 1468, Chen Xianzhang travelled north again. The Ministry of Rites invited Chen to participate in the examinations. However, after the examination, Chen's exam mysteriously went missing. According to Chen Xianzhang's student Zhang Xu, rumor in the capital had it that some envious officials stole Chen's exam to prevent him from

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<sup>146</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 36.

<sup>147</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 36.



getting a degree.<sup>148</sup> And Yin Min was the probable suspect.<sup>149</sup> Although this incident seemed unfortunate, Chen's reaction was far from what one might have expected:

At the examination at the Ministry of Rites, [Xianzhang] failed again. Various scholars went to offer their words of comfort. Master laughed loudly. Zhuang Chang (b. 1434)<sup>150</sup> said: "The sadness and pity of the others are simply too vulgar. The loud laugh of the Master, however, is too difficult to understand. The two [reactions] are both too excessive and missing the point." The Master nodded his head to Zhuang's comment.

禮闈再下第。群公往慰，先生大笑。莊昶曰：「他人戚戚太低，先生大笑太高，二者過不及。」先生頷之。<sup>151</sup>

The reaction of Chen about his unfortunate "failure" in the examination definitely echoed with his well-disguised reason to be in the capital. Chen's reaction also surprised many of those who followed the incident. While in the capital, Chen Xianzhang was lodging at the Shenyueguan 神樂觀 (the Imperial Office of Ceremonial Music).<sup>152</sup> Several northerners who despised Chen Xianzhang were heard saying that they would "go give Chen

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<sup>148</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 870.

<sup>149</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 37-38.

<sup>150</sup> Zhuang Chang was a good friend of Chen whom Chen met when he went to the capital in 1466. They shared some similar philosophical views early in their lives, but the friendship got bitter later on. *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 5-6.

<sup>151</sup> *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 37.

<sup>152</sup> Qiu Shusen 邱樹森 ed., *Zhongguo lidai zhiguan cidian* 中國歷代職官辭典 [Dictionary of Chinese Dynastic Offices and Official Titles] (Jiangxi: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 525.

Xianzhang a hard time.”<sup>153</sup> Yet, when they arrived at the Shenyueguan, they were taken aback by Chen’s magnanimity. They were convinced that Xianzhang was indeed “a rarely extraordinary man,” and that they could not disrespect him.<sup>154</sup> Clearly, the scholar-officials’ and the students’ impression of Chen Xianzhang as a legitimate intellectual was again further strengthened in this trip.<sup>155</sup>

Meanwhile, Hu Juren, who was in charge of the Academy of the White Deer Grotto, also openly criticized the ineffectiveness of the curriculum at the state-operated schools and helped fuel the changing attitude towards private academies. Given his close association with the Cheng-Zhu school of thought, which was still the orthodoxy among the Confucian circle, his influence must have extended to those who Chen Xianzhang could not appeal to.<sup>156</sup> In fact, Hu Juren specifically addressed his students about the Confucians of their time. Hu asserted:

The Confucian intellectuals of this day learn in the bad way because of the utilitarian purpose of the civil service examinations.

今之士，習不美，只緣科舉功利害之能。<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> 北土龔鄙者數人約曰：「必共往困折之。」 *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 37.

<sup>154</sup> 及見先生，忸然氣沮，口噤各不能發一語，反致羞而退，因與人曰：「果異人，不可狎玩也。」 *Chen Xianzhang nianpu*, 37.

<sup>155</sup> In the *xingzhuang* 行狀 (Biographical Records), Zhang Xu says: 「遂復遊太學。」 In this case, 太學 is the Imperial Academy. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 869.

<sup>156</sup> In the *Mingru xuean*, it suggested that Wu Yubi had many students from different places. 「居鄉，躬耕食力，弟子從游者甚眾。」 (“Dwelling in the rural areas, he farmed in person in the fields and consumed the product of his own efforts. His students and followers were numerous.” *Mingru xuean*, 1.15; Chen Xianzhang himself alone travelled from Guangdong to Jiangxi for Wu Yubi’s tutelage.

<sup>157</sup> Hu Juren 胡居仁, *Juyilu* 居業錄, 5.27-28.

On another occasion, he criticized the examination curriculum being detrimental to self-cultivation:

The examinations of this day not only cannot attract wise talent, but truly are detrimental to one's continuous self-cultivation.

今之科舉非徒不能得賢反廢人進修之實。<sup>158</sup>

In combination of Chen's endeavors in the capital, Hu Juren's commitment also persuaded many local officials and promising students in Jiangxi. Even Huang Zongxi praised Hu in the *Mingru xue'an* for his contribution in guiding the students of his time toward being more accepting about staying in their native areas and serving their local communities through private academies:

When he [Hu Juren] turned twenty years of age, he was inspired to devote himself to the learning of the sages. He travelled to Master Wu Kangzhai [Yubi]'s to study under him, and subsequently foregone all intention to take the examinations. He then built a studio with in Meixi Mountains. He lectured there in person and refused to participate in any societal-political event.

弱冠時，奮志聖賢之學，往游康齋吳先生之門，遂絕意科舉，築室於梅溪山中，事親講學之外，不干人事。<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Hu, *Juyilu*, 5.8B

<sup>159</sup> There are two other passages praising Hu's contribution in the *Mingru xue'an*, which described Hu Yubi as "a pioneer in Ming thought," giving him credit for establishing the foundation of later intellectual development: "Simple wheels are the beginning of grand chariots. Stacked glaze is formed by accumulated water. Without Kangzhai<sup>159</sup> (Wu Yubi), from where would the later flourishing of the Confucian tradition derives?" (椎輪為大輅之始，增冰為積水所成，微康齋，焉得有後時之盛哉). And "[Hu had] forgone the examination enterprise, declined all position offers, and dwelled alone in his tiny studio" (遂棄去舉子業，謝人事，獨處小樓). *Mingru xuean*, 2.29, 1.14.

As elucidated, despite their lack of the *jinshi* degree and the standard credential of a traditionally respectable scholar, Chen's and Hu's unyielding commitment to, and their active promotion of, private academies successfully influenced the larger Confucian circle's perception of private academies as the alternative space for them to assert their cultural and political influence. As Lü Miao-fen insightfully pointed out in her study of the Yangming School of intellectuals of the late Ming: "without the leadership of individual influential scholars and officials, the *jianghui* culture of the late Ming would not have been given birth."<sup>160</sup> What came next was Wang Yangming's emergence and his dominance over the Ming intellectual discourse. It was also during this time period that Wang Yangming was able to establish a new theoretical platform for the development of private academies and eventually the *jianghui* culture. Wang Yangming's extraordinary accomplishments, at the same time, would pose new problems for both Chen's and Hu's case of enshrinement later on.<sup>161</sup>

### 3.2: YANGMING'S MERIT AND THEORETICAL INVENTIONS

As Yang Zhengxian suggested and sufficiently proved in his study of Wang Yangming's case of enshrinement in 1584, Wang Yangming's remarkable career as an official set an important precedent and a new standard for measuring the "worthiness" of

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<sup>160</sup> Lü Miao-fen, "Yangming xue jianghui," 50.

<sup>161</sup> Chen and Hu have never obtained the *jinshi* degree, and were still far from being considered "successful" enough to be considered for enshrinement. On the other hand, although Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) had a *jinshi* degree, it was after two failed examination attempts that he was finally able to pass the capital level examination in 1499 and obtained the degree. Therefore, although there were differences in circumstances, their backgrounds were somewhat similar. And that played a heavy role in the enshrinement debates later on. Wu Guang 吳光 et al. ed., *Wang Yangming quan ji* 王陽明全集 [Complete Collection of Wang Yangming's writings] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 40.1543.

any enshrinement candidates that followed.<sup>162</sup> Because of Wang Yangming, not only the emphasis on “practical merit (*shi gong* 事功)” was raised to unprecedented levels, the candidate’s intellectual contribution to the overall Confucian tradition was also scrutinized.<sup>163</sup> As a result, throughout the enshrinement debates, supporters of Chen Xianzhang’s and Hu Juren’s enshrinement cases had a difficult time to argue their cases as equals to Wang Yangming’s case.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was to argue for Chen’s and Hu’s philosophical accomplishments, in particular the impact of their philosophies on the larger intellectual discourse in the Ming, as compared to Wang’s. As Professor Yü Ying-shih pointed out in his *Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua* 士與中國文化 [Confucian Intellectuals and Chinese Culture], Wang Yangming’s importance in terms of advancing the development of the Confucian tradition was simply unmatched by any other Ming intellectual. With the Confucian ideal of “assisting the ruler in practicing the Way (*de jun xing dao* 得君行道)” that was once strongly preached by Song Confucians, such as Wang Anshi, the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi), Zhu Xi, and Lu Jiuyuan, “ceased to exist in the times of Wang Yangming and his disciples in the Ming,”<sup>164</sup> Wang’s ideas and theories breathed new life into the struggling Confucian tradition.

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<sup>162</sup> Yang Zhangxian 楊正顯, “Wang Yangming nianpu yu cong si Kongmiao zhi yanjiu” 王陽明年譜與從祀孔廟之研究 (A Study of Wang Yangming’s Biography and His Enshrinement in the Confucian Temple), *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 [Chinese Studies] 29.1 (2011): 153-187.

<sup>163</sup> Yang Zhangxian, “Wang Yangming nianpu,” 166.

<sup>164</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 3.

Wang Yangming, living under the pressure of Ming despotism, understood that he had to establish a new theoretical platform that would support the Ming Confucians' claim to cultural and political power while avoiding to risk direct confrontation with the authority of the emperor and the Ming political establishment. With the previous theoretical platform that had supported the Song Confucians' claim to legitimate cultural power, most prominently the ideal of "inward as sage, outward as king" (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王),<sup>165</sup> heavily suppressed by Ming despotism, Wang Yangming was forced to find an alternative.

His subsequent invention was undeniably monumental. After being banished to Guizhou in 1508, Wang Yangming seemed to have arrived at a new understanding of the political reality.<sup>166</sup> Wang Yangming arrived at his intellectual breakthrough and devised two ideas that forever changed the Ming intellectual landscape. His two most significant ideas in this time of great political struggle were "attaining innate morality (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知)"<sup>167</sup> and "awakening the masses to practice the Way" (*jue min xing dao* 覺民行道).<sup>168</sup> As the Ming imperial court failed to improve its partnership with the Confucian scholar-officials, the "outward as king" and the "obtaining [audience] with the ruler to practice the way (*dejun xingdao* 得君行道)" aspects were no longer options for Ming

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<sup>165</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 282.

<sup>166</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 278.

<sup>167</sup> Chan Wing-tsit suggests that the core value of Wang Yangming's philosophy lies in his emphasis on human's inner morality. For his detailed discussion of Wang Yangming's thought, see *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 655.

<sup>168</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 297.

Confucians. Wang Yangming was clearly aware of that. In his writings produced during his period of “enlightenment” at Longchang, Guizhou, he expressed the importance of having an “unbendable will” while facing oppression. Wang Yangming stated:

I am here [in Longchang] because I rebuked [the wicked officials at court], [which is] not the way officials should be treated. When I rebuke, I was advising [as an official], not as a [political] labor. Those who labor employ physical strength; those who advise [as officials] employ the Way. Physical strength can be put to submission. The Way cannot be put to submission.

吾之來也，譴也，非仕也；吾之譴也，乃仕也，非役也。役者以力，仕者以道；力可屈也，道不可屈也。<sup>169</sup>

Forced to exercise their Confucian duty and power elsewhere, Wang Yangming and his contemporaries, although frustrated and demoralized, seemed to have finally found new life. Wang Yangming, with his extraordinary brilliance, helped built a new theoretical base that legitimized private academies as the alternative space for political discussions. In combination with the previous popularization of private academies in certain parts of the country, which largely resulted from Chen’s and Hu’s earlier efforts, the ripple that they had created in the Confucian community had begun to spread. The collective will of the Confucian community had clearly shifted focus from the Song belief of “obtaining [audience with] the ruler to practice the Way” to Wang Yangming’s “awakening the masses to practice the Way.”

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<sup>169</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Song Ming lixue*, 282.

Wang Yangming's contribution to the development and the politicization of private academies also fueled the emergence of the prominent *jianghui* culture of the late Ming. The relationship between the revitalization of private academies in the mid-Ming and the emergence of *jianghui* culture in the late Ming has mainly been discussed by Lü Miao-fen in her series of articles on the Yangming School of intellectuals. In her works, Lü Miao-fen has effectively argued that most *jianghui* groups were born out of the regular gatherings at private academies throughout southeastern China, in particular the Jiangnan region.<sup>170</sup> While Benjamin Elman has argued that the Ming scholar-officials still tended to remain loyal and unconditional participants in the state institutions established around the central bureaucracy,<sup>171</sup> as indicated, at least a group of intellectuals, including Chen, Hu, the later Wang Yangming, and those who were influenced by their ideal, sought and successfully found new platforms to assert their influence outside of the political establishment.

The transformation of some members of the Confucian community from being unconditional participants of the central government to devoted regionally-based intellectuals demonstrates that the call for change was relatively prevalent. Wang Yangming's dramatic rise to national relevance was also fueled by this desire for change among Confucian intellectuals. Of course, Wang's philosophy itself addressed some of the most fundamental issues with the Confucian community's struggle and provided very realistic solutions to the issues. But Wang's position as the antithesis to the dominant

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<sup>170</sup> Lü Miao-fen, "Yangming xue jianghui," 50-53.

<sup>171</sup> Benjamin Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, 50.



Cheng-Zhu tradition often attracted most of the attention, while this shift of focus to private academies was often obscured by the sweeping discourse of the revival of *xinxue*, a movement led by Wang Yangming, and *xinxue*'s challenge to the Cheng-Zhu tradition at the time.

The revitalization of private academies undoubtedly provided rich soil for the birth and growth of *jianghui* in the Ming. As Lü Miao-fen suggested, *jianghui* can basically be defined as “discussion meetings about any kind of learning.” It can also take many forms. For example, in its earliest days, daily lectures in private academies, gathering of friends with similar interests, formal academic meetings for Confucian intellectuals, and public lectures hosted at local schools, private academies, or in informal venues such as temples by renowned scholars can all be considered as types of *jianghui*.<sup>172</sup>

*Jianghui* leaders and participants also came from a variety of backgrounds. They varied from students of the local schools, Confucian intellectuals from the area, powerful and wealthy local gentry who were once students, to reputable Confucian scholar-officials serving in high positions at court. Among *jianghui* organizers, Wang Yangming's students were the most active and influential. Such students included Wang Gen 王艮 (1483-1541), Qian Dehong 錢德洪 (1496-1574), Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583), Zou Shouyi 鄒守益 (1491-1562), Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (1504-1564), Nie Bao 聶豹

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<sup>172</sup> The number of participants in these discussion meetings varies. Sometimes they began as small friendly gatherings between several local scholars and students, and then developed into large events such as the Qingyuan gathering 青原會 and the Shuixi gathering 水西會 hosted by students of Wang Yangming. Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren shequn*, 74.

(1487-1563), Ouyang De 歐陽德 (1496-1554), and Liu Wenmin 劉文敏 (1490-1572).<sup>173</sup>

The individuals all led major *jianghui* at some point in their lives.

Some of the most popular discussion topics of these discussion gatherings revolved primarily around Wang Yangming's teachings. However, the *jianghui* culture, in its essence, as Lü Miao-fen argued, was motivated by the need to express criticisms against the state.<sup>174</sup> This echoes Chen's and Hu's original intention in developing private academies in their native regions as a platform for discussions of local issues. Scattered mostly across the southeastern and southern provinces, those intellectuals who were influenced by Chen and Hu also followed that model. As a result, when the idea of *jianghui* began to emerge following the rise of the Yangming School, its formats, ideals, and culture were already familiar to many members of the Confucian community in those regions.<sup>175</sup> With different intellectuals contributing to the cause, the emergence of *jianghui* would eventually strengthen the previous pattern of "localization of elite" and further popularize the idea of using private academies as an alternative space for political discussions.

Qian Mu once suggested that *jianghui* was different from "private lecture halls" (*jiangtang* 講堂) of the earlier times because the latter merely consisted of groups of

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<sup>173</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren shequn*, 113.

<sup>174</sup> Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583) repeatedly criticized the prevalence of "vulgar learning" (*su xue* 俗學). In Wang Ji's collection of writings, he is very vocal about the ineffectiveness of the examinations in cultivating "real learning." Wang Longxi *xiansheng quanji* 王龍溪先生全集, *juan* 1, 2, 7, 8; Nie Bao 聶豹 (1487-1563) suggested the proposal of recruiting *jinshi* (presented scholars) by the merits of virtue; Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren*, 37, 41.

<sup>175</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren shequn*, 76.

students studying under one teacher or lecturer. For *jianghui*, however, discussions were much more dynamic as multiple scholars would often be invited to participate as lecturers in a given occasion.<sup>176</sup> The revival of private academies and the emergence of *jianghui* would ultimately merge as one under Wang Yangming.<sup>177</sup> It was clear to supporters of private academies at the time that the momentum was on their side, with private academies rising from the ruins of past glory due to the new theoretical support provided by Yangming's ideas. These supporters would begin to consider the possibility of gaining official recognition for Chen's, Hu's, and Wang's endeavors. Suggestions about enshrining Chen Xianzhang and Hu Juren were the first to surface in the decade following Chen's death in 1500, with similar suggestions for Wang Yangming followed after Wang's death in 1529.

The belief of private academies as an alternative cultural space for political discussions was then solidified and continued to transcend fractional boundaries. Despite their many philosophical differences, students of Chen, Hu, and Wang would be seen pursuing the same goal when they engaged in the enshrinement debates in the decades leading up to 1584.<sup>178</sup> Throughout the enshrinement debates that spanned across several

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<sup>176</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren*, 84. Also see Qian Mu, *Guoshi dagang* 國史大綱 (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1985), 611.

<sup>177</sup> As previously mentioned, Wang Yangming himself was responsible for the construction of two private academies.

<sup>178</sup> Shigasaki Ichio 志賀一郎 "Wang Yangming yu Zhan Ganquan de you qing" 王陽明與湛甘泉的友情 (The Friendship Between Wang Yangming and Zhan Ganquan), *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊 [Academic Journal of Zhejiang] 4 (1989): 14-19; Li Yeming 黎業明, "Zhan Ruoshui yu Wang Yangming guan yu Ru Shi Dao wen ti de lun bian" 湛若水與王陽明關於儒釋道問題的論辯 (Arguments Between Zhan Ruoshui and Wang Yangming on the Question of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism), *Xueshu yanjiu* 學術研究 [Academic Studies] 6 (2009): 37-41.

decades, Wang Yangming would become the most important of the three as his stellar record of accomplishments as an official was the foundation on which many of the discussions regarding the three intellectuals' "worthiness" for enshrinement based. With each of Chen's, Hu's, and Wang's contributions to the advancement of the Confucian tradition in the Ming carefully taken into account, the stage for the discussion about the enshrinement of Chen, Hu, and Wang as pioneers is set.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ENSHRINEMENT CASE OF 1584

In traditional China, the Confucian Temple sat right at the point of convergence of cultural power and political power. As the preeminent cultural institution in the country, there was no higher honor for a Confucian intellectual than being enshrined in the Confucian Temple. At the same time, enshrinement was a political institution that was sanctioned and sponsored by the state. As a result of this relationship, the process of enshrinement was often a struggle between the Confucian scholar-officials and the throne. Demonstrated through the process of enshrinement were how imperial power and the cultural power of Confucian intellectuals interacted and collided,<sup>179</sup> and ultimately, how new paradigms were born.

The rules of enshrinement were amended and modified a number of times throughout the history of imperial China. The Confucian Temple was first institutionalized in the Han dynasty. Local Confucian Temples were first built during the same time.<sup>180</sup> But it was not until the early Tang that the institution of the Confucian Temple, as well as the rules and rituals of enshrinement, had finally taken shape. Some significant changes from the Tang forward included the official establishment as Confucius as the foremost figure in the Confucian lineage; expansion of local Confucian

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<sup>179</sup> Huang Chin-shing 黃進興, *Youru shengyu: quanli, xinyang yu zhengdangxing* 優入聖域: 權力, 信仰與正當性 [Entering the Master's Sanctuary: Power, Belief and Legitimacy in Traditional China] (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 1994), 133.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 130-133.

Temples throughout China; the enshrinement of the “ten wise ones” (*shi zhe* 十哲)<sup>181</sup>; the granting of noble titles to Confucius as a prince and his disciples as dukes and marquises; and finally the use of imperial rituals for paying respect to enshrined individuals in the Confucian Temple.<sup>182</sup> By the early to mid-1500s, the significance of the Confucian Temple as a cultural symbol was at its height. Until in the ninth year of the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign era in the Ming (1530), a series of dramatic changes to ritual routines for the Confucian Temple, initiated by Emperor Shizong 明世宗 (the Jiajing Emperor, r. 1521 – 1567), reversed that upward momentum.<sup>183</sup>

The Confucian Temple and its enshrinement system had always helped maintain the elaborate balance between the political authority of the emperor and the cultural authority of the Confucian intellectuals.<sup>184</sup> However, after the Jiajing Emperor’s ascendancy to the throne, this balance was severely undermined. On various occasions throughout the Ming, enshrinement cases reflected the political reality at the time, but there had never been a more intensely debated case in the Ming than the enshrinement

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<sup>181</sup> The Ten Wise Ones are: Yan Hui 顏回, Min Sun 閔損, Ran Geng 冉耕, Ran Yong 冉雍, Zai Wo 宰我, Ruimu Ci 端木賜, Ran Qiu 冉求, Zhong You 仲由, Yan Yan 言偃, and Pu Shang 卜商. They each presents one of the four qualifications: 德行 (virtuous actions), 言語 (words and discourses), 政事 (political endeavors), 文學 (literary learning). This change was implemented in 674. *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜, 367.1.

<sup>182</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 131.

<sup>183</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 130-133.

<sup>184</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 126.

case of 1584.<sup>185</sup> Primarily, it was due to the fact that the candidates involved in the case of 1584 were essentially challenging the authority of the state and the emperor.<sup>186</sup>

In addition, the 1584 case presented a particularly interesting phenomenon. With the Confucian intellectuals at court frequently divided by ideological, educational, and political affiliations, the enshrinement debates were, more often than not, stages for different fractions of officials to assert political power over each other. However, during the enshrinement case of 1584, different fractions of officials seemed to have resorted to a more low-profile approach. Perhaps they were aware of the similarities shared by the three candidates as well.

The enshrinement debates leading up to 1584 were also impacted by contemporary developments in central politics. Beginning in 1521, immediately after the enthronement of the the Jiajing Emperor 嘉靖帝, a fierce conflict between the emperor and the officials broke out. As the Jiajing Emperor insisted to have his birth father, the Xian Prince of Xing 興獻王 (1476 – 1519), posthumously recognized with imperial status and refused to succeed the family line of his cousin and predecessor, the Zhengde

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<sup>185</sup> Huang asserted that traditional scholars in the past have effectively pointed out the inevitable conflict between the imperial order and the Confucian intellectuals derived from the challenge the Confucian Temple posed against the emperor's legitimacy to rule. Huang Chin-shing 黃進興, "Daotong yu zhitong zhi jian: cong Ming Jiajing jiu nian (1530) Kongmiao gai zhi tan qi" 道統與治統之間: 從明嘉靖九年 (1530) 孔廟改制談起 (In Between Political Legitimacy and Cultural Legitimacy: Speaking from the 1530 Changes to the Institutional Structure of the Confucian Temple), *Bulletin of Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 61, no. 4 (1990): 917-941.

<sup>186</sup> Huang Chin-shing quoted a statement made by Ming Confucian intellectual Lu Kun 呂坤 (1536 – 1618), referring to the two highest forms of power in society: *li* 理 represented by the Confucian tradition, and *shi* 勢 embodied by imperial power. It clearly expressed that Ming intellectuals were well-aware of their power and influence as an elite group even when the subject that was being discussed was the often tabooed topic of imperial authority. It makes the discussion of such an institution as the Confucian Temple and its enshrinement system all that more meaningful in terms of providing new insights to traditional Chinese political culture. Huang Chin-shing, "Daotong yu zhitong," 917-918.

Emperor 正德帝 (r. 1505 – 1521), a great number of high-ranking officials, led by the powerful premier Yang Tinghe 楊廷和 (1459 – 1529), were enraged and challenged the emperor.<sup>187</sup> In 1524, the political conflict at court escalated to its height. When the officials continued to deny the Jiajing Emperor's request to recognize his late father as an emperor, Jiajing, outraged and frustrated, ordered 134 officials to be arrested by his imperial guards, the Jinyiwei 錦衣衛 (Brocade-coated Guards), and had sixteen other officials battered to death at court. The entire upper-echelon at court was essentially quieted by this horrifying incident. This finally marked the end of the so-called “Great Debate of Propriety” (*da li yi* 大禮議).<sup>188</sup>

The 1584 enshrinement case, although still in its early stages when this incident took place, was certainly affected by the aftermath of this “Great Debate.” With the “Great Debate” leaving a scar on the relationship between the emperor and his ministers, the Confucian Temple, which represented the cultural authority of the entire body of scholar-officials, became a target of “reforms” in the ensuing years. The Jiajing Emperor's special visit to the Imperial Academy (*taixue* 太學) in March of 1533 illustrated the situation. The *Ming shilu* 明實錄 (Archival Record of the Ming) elaborated on the event in this account:

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<sup>187</sup> You Shu-jun 尤淑君, “Mingfen yu huangquan zhong su: da li yi yu Ming Jiajing chao zhengzhi wenhua” 名分與皇權重塑: 大禮議與明嘉靖朝政治文化 (Reconstruction of Rightful Title and Imperial Power: the Great Debate of Propriety and the Political Culture of the Jiajing Reign During the Ming Dynasty) (master's thesis, National Chengchi University, 2004), 52, <http://thesis.lib.nccu.edu.tw/record/#G0901530031>.

<sup>188</sup> Huang, “Daotong yu zhitong,” 922.



On the sixteenth day [of March, 1533], the Chancellor [of the Imperial Academy] and the Director of Studies<sup>189</sup> led the faculty and the numerous students to express gratitude for the Emperor's generosity. The Emperor's responding decree said: "I, the Emperor, have first and foremost concerned myself with ruling the world, nurturing the people, and civilizing the populace as a ruler. When I first ascended the throne, I had for the first time visited the Imperial Academy personally to pay my respect and confess to the late Master [Confucius]; [I arranged for] lectures to be held and the Way to be studied, in order to urge and encourage the numerous students. Now, with this ceremonial ritual, [I] set the Confucian Temple to its right course and to come to pay ritual tribute. I respectfully conduct the rituals with wine and food.<sup>190</sup> With you numerous students all equipped and ready to bear responsibilities, [I] have arranged the lectures on the explanation of the Classics. You shall all be honored and encouraged by the lectures and teachings, for I am here to lead and supervise you all to be aspired. Your task lies in [strengthening] the foundation [of the society] and to honorably put [the culture of our nation] to practical use in order to support [the effort of] civilizing with [our culture]. Isn't this magnificent? Alas! The true name (aim) of the Confucian Order is to prioritize the Way of the *Great Learning* and emphasize the cultivation of the self. You teachers and students shall be honorably encouraged

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<sup>189</sup> Hucker translated this title as the "Director of Studies." The position was essentially the deputy of the Chancellor. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 459.

<sup>190</sup> The definition of 釋奠之禮 was provided by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) in his commentary of the *Liji* 禮記: 「釋奠者，設薦饌酌奠而已。」 (Of the rituals with wine and food, it was simply setting forth wine and food for sacrifices).

as talented literati.” [The teachers and students of the Imperial Academy] thank the Emperor once more.

己未，祭酒司業率學官諸生謝恩。上賜之敕曰：「朕惟人君御世撫民教化為先。朕即位之初，嘗親臨太學，祇謁先師，講論治道，以勸厲諸生。茲以祀典，釐正載詣孔廟，恭行釋奠之禮。具進爾諸生，講解經義。爾等尚懋乃敦學，率厲作興，務在惇本，尚實用贊我國家文明之化。顧不為(偉)歟？於戲孔氏之教，正名是先大學之道，修己為要。爾師生其敬勉之明日文俊。」等復謝恩。<sup>191</sup>

What one can conclude from this passage is that the Jiajing Emperor, after having experienced the effects of the “Great Debate,” decided to impose a tighter grip on the Confucian scholar-officials by asserting his superiority and imperial power in front of them in a spectacular fashion. In such a politically-charged environment, the 1584 enshrinement case slowly unfolded.

After the Jiajing Emperor’s victory over his ministers in the controversial “Debate of the Great Propriety” in 1524, imperial power was virtually unchallengeable. In asserting his power over the scholar-officials, the Jiajing Emperor imposed changes to the ritual routines for enshrinements in the Confucian Temple and basically degraded the status of the Confucian Temple. The implementation of this demotion by direct imperial edicts alarmed the Confucian scholars-officials at court. They were fully aware of the implication of such change: the subjugation of their power to define their own lineage

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<sup>191</sup> *Ming shilu* 明實錄, 183.3416.

and tradition as a collective group of elite to the imperial power of the emperor. The need for them to reestablish the balance between the power of *daotong* (道統, cultural tradition) and the power of *zhitong* (治統, imperial tradition) was dire.

The enshrinement case of 1584 was also an example where the Confucian intellectuals attempted to regain that power of defining their own tradition through political maneuvers. This was especially noticeable in the case of Chen Xianzhang, as Chen was seemingly the least qualified candidate in the traditional sense.<sup>192</sup> Chen Xianzhang's supporters, mainly his students, were well-aware of this disadvantage. Following Chen's death in 1500, there immediately was a tug of war between his students in defining Chen's place in the Confucian lineage and his qualification as a worthy enshrinement candidate.

Chen Xianzhang's opposition often criticized him for his lack of official credential, his Buddhist-like tendencies in his thinking, and his lack of exegetical writings on the Confucian Classics. Hu Juren's criticisms of Chen Xianzhang for being essentially a Buddhist was probably the main support of these criticisms against Chen.<sup>193</sup> Prior to 1530, Chen's students largely remained low-profile about these criticism. But in the following 30 years, Chen Xianzhang's students were constantly making efforts to put their school in a better position for recognition in the future. For example, Chen's most politically prominent student, Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466-1560), was a close associate

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<sup>192</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, I will only briefly mention the disputes surrounding Wang Yangming's and Hu Juren's cases because there are already plenty of studies on Wang Yangming's enshrinement. And Hu Juren's enshrinement was without significant controversies. For a study on Wang Yangming's enshrinement, see Yang Zhengxian, "Wang Yangming nianpu yu congshi kongmiao zhi yanjiu," 153-187.

<sup>193</sup> Lü Miao-fen, *Hu Juren yu Chen Xianzhang*, 51-52, 95.

of the rising Wang Yangming from 1506.<sup>194</sup> For the next 23 years until Wang Yangming's death in 1529, they had always been in close contact with each other. This was a deliberate plan on Zhan's part in allying Chen's school with Wang's in the hope of gaining mutual support from Wang and his students, who were the most active in central politics and in operating private academies around the country at the time.

Meanwhile, briefly after Chen Xianzhang's death, other students of Xianzhang became active in publishing his writings and redefining Xianzhang's thought by writing commentative works on Xianzhang's theories and ideas. Their hope was to forestall criticisms against Xianzhang that question his Confucian origin and his lack of exegetical writings. For example, in as early as 1501, Chen Xianzhang's student Zhang Xu had already written a biographical summary of Chen to address and rebut some of the criticisms. In his *Baisha xiansheng xingzhuang* 白沙先生行狀 [Biographical Summary of Master Baisha's Life], Zhang Xu relentlessly defended the intellectual heritage of his teacher, arguing that Chen Xianzhang's ideas were directly inspired by the sages of antiquity.<sup>195</sup> Zhang Xu argued:

Now that the Zhe and the Min regions are the central region of heaven and earth, shouldn't our hundred Yue region be the Zou and the Lu regions to them?

Therefore, stars descended upon us and snow responded; they were the manifestation of the Celestial Way. A sage man was given birth here; it was the response from the realm of Man. He succeeded to the lost knowledge of

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<sup>194</sup> Li Yeming 黎業明, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu* 湛若水年譜 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 32.

<sup>195</sup> Yang Zhengxian 楊正顯, "Baisha xue di dingwei yu chengli," 1-51.

Confucius here in order to establish continuity for the perennial succession of the Dao. How can this be capable of men? But my master, Master Baisha, was indeed that person.

今浙閩為天地之中，然則我百粵其鄒魯歟？是故星臨雪應，天道章矣；哲人降生，人事應矣。於焉繼孔氏絕學以開萬世道統之傳，此豈人力也哉？若吾師白沙先生蓋其人也。<sup>196</sup>

In response to the criticism of Chen Xianzhang's lack of exegetical writings, Zhang Xu's biographical summary included several quotes from Chen's poems and explained Xianzhang's reasons for not producing that type of writings. For example, Zhang Xu quoted: "laugh not about this old idle fellow's [Chen himself] lack of [exegetical] writings, for the true Confucian is unlike the kinds of Zheng Kangcheng (Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, 127-200)."<sup>197</sup> Another similar statement by Chen stated: "in those years that I [Chen] have been carefree in my idle life, I face only the green mountains, not the writing of books."<sup>198</sup> Zhang's motivation in selecting these quotes and emphasizing them is clearly in response to the criticisms against Chen Xianzhang's limited record of exegetical production. Zhang Xu's defense of his teacher would prove to be quite foresighted and influential among other students of Chen Xianzhang in the years following 1530.

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<sup>196</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 882.

<sup>197</sup> Chen Xianzhang's poem was 「莫笑老慵無著述，真儒不是鄭康成。」 Zheng Xuan, the famous Han Classicist, was known for his exegetical works on the Classics. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 880.

<sup>198</sup> 「他年儻遂投閒計，只對青山不著書。」 *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 880.

Zhang Xu also published a collection of Chen's writings in 1505 to fill the void in Chen's literary production.<sup>199</sup> Similar to Zhang Xu's approach, other students of Xianzhang also specifically focused on defending their master's "pure Confucian lineage" in countering criticisms against Chen Xianzhang's intellectual background. For instance, another one of Chen's students, Lin Guang 林光 (1439-1519), also wrote an epitaph for Xianzhang defending his Confucian lineage. However, Lin took a different approach than Zhang Xu and asserted that Chen Xianzhang obtained his learning directly from the Cheng-Zhu tradition of the Song, rather than the sages of antiquity, and was the most recent representative of the Cheng-Zhu lineage.<sup>200</sup> Between 1521 and 1522, Zhan Ruoshui joined the discussion and wrote an epitaph for the relocation of Chen Xianzhang's tomb, reasserting Lin Guang's claim of Chen's Song Confucian lineage.<sup>201</sup> Three years later, Zhan published the *Baisha xiansheng shijiaojie* 白沙先生詩教解

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<sup>199</sup> *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 890.

<sup>200</sup> Lin Guang tried to link Chen Xianzhang to the Song Confucians:

The Song possessed the realm in a total of three hundred and odd years. Its civilization was indeed prosperous. Yet, the Yuan's marshal power forced and chased the Song into extinction at Yamen in Xinhui, Guangdong. Xinhui is the most southern part of the realm and the terminal of the most upright qi. In the southern wilderness, there are the last of the sagely kind. The ocean and the mountains [of the south] conceived spirituality. They congealed upon this land and have remained here for long. It is conceivable that great men will be born here and become the treasure of the empire.

其生必有所自。宋有天下，積累三百餘年，文物可謂盛矣，元將迫逐，滅之於廣東新會之崖門。於時忠臣義士，十萬生靈，悉沉殞於海，英魂義氣，郁墜於此。蓋百有餘年，然後我太祖高皇帝龍興淮甸，掃滌寰宇，變夷為華，功格於天。新會乃天地極南，中氣之終處，碩果不食，海岳孕靈。向之郁附於茲者，停蓄已久，意其必篤生偉人，以為國家之寶。

Lin Guang 林光, *Nanchuan bingnie quanji* 南川冰蘗全集 [Complete Collected Writings of Lin Nanchuan], punctuated Luo Bangzhu 羅邦柱 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2004), 177-182; Yang Zhengxian, "Baisha," 8-9.

<sup>201</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 83.

[Instructional Annotation on Master Baisha's Poetry] and used references from the Classics to annotate Chen Xianzhang's poems in the attempt to solve the problem with Xianzhang's lack of exegetical writings.<sup>202</sup>

Lin Guang's version of Chen Xianzhang's learning and lineage was deemed more acceptable by Zhan. The possible reason could be that in Zhang Xu's biographical summary, the claim of Chen Xianzhang being the "true successor of the Confucians of antiquity; even the learning of the Cheng Brothers cannot match him" might seem too extreme to many scholar-officials at court. As an experienced official at court, Zhan definitely would have known about it if there was indeed any sentiment against this claim within the larger Confucian circle. Zhan also understood the importance in drawing support from different political fractions to increase the credibility and likelihood of Chen's case of enshrinement. Even as the only surviving student of Chen Xianzhang at the time, Zhan was determined to keep his personal opinion about Chen Xianzhang's intellectual lineage, which would have been logically closer to that of Zhang Xu's, not Lin Guang's, from influencing his political judgement. Eventually, Zhan's political acumen and determination would be rewarded.

In 1530, as Chen Xianzhang's last surviving student that still held a position in the bureaucracy, Zhan saw a great opportunity to further strengthen the foundation for Chen's case of enshrinement in the future. When the Jiajing Emperor approved the enshrinement of Northern Song scholar Hu Yuan, the focus of the enshrinement qualifications had begun to shift: "the establishment of virtue" (*li de* 立德) and "the

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<sup>202</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 119-123.

establishment of words [exegetical writings]” (*li yan* 立言) were slowly changing places in their order of importance.<sup>203</sup> Traditionally, the value placed on the establishment of words had always been superior to that on the establishment of virtue when it came to judging one’s qualification for enshrinement in the Confucian Temple.<sup>204</sup> The enshrinement of Hu Yuan, who was generally considered as a Confucian with little exegetical production, signified the beginning of the shift of focus from *li yan* to *li de*.<sup>205</sup> Zhan Ruoshui was well-aware of the shift of focus and the possible implication of such a shift. When the Jiajing Emperor demanded the removal of such exegetical experts as Zheng Xuan from the Confucian Temple, he immediately submitted a memorial to praise the emperor’s decision:

The standards of conducting rituals in the Northern suburb of the capital started with the ilk of Han Confucians such as Shi Dan<sup>206</sup> and Zheng Xuan. In the beginning of the dynasty, the rituals were once conducted separately. And then it was combined again. Perhaps our Imperial Ancestor would see this as deeply suspicious. Therefore, [if you, my emperor, can] change it once and for all with courage and determination, this will then be the end of all the disputes. It will certainly fathom out the propriety of antiquity and establish this reign as the

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<sup>203</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 277.

<sup>204</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 277, 279.

<sup>205</sup> Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 276-277.

<sup>206</sup> Shi Dan 師丹 (d. ca. 3 AD) was a minister at the court of Western Han (BC 202 – 8 AD).



standard for the entire realm, many generations to come. It hasn't been this way because of all the [unnecessary] disputes.<sup>207</sup>

北郊之說起於漢儒師丹，鄭玄之徒；國家初行分祭，後復合為一，或者我皇祖之心亦深見其可疑。故能勇決改之，是非之歸，必求盡出古禮，使世為天下則。不爾，亦聚訟耳。<sup>208</sup>

Starting from the moment he chose to stand on Lin Guang's side, Zhan Ruoshui always had one important consideration in mind. That is to draw as much political support to him and his school as possible. As compared to Zhang Xu, and many other students of Chen, Lin Guang spent more time in the bureaucracy and was closer to the upper echelon of the government. Most importantly, Lin Guang served at the Directorate of Education in Nanjing for years and was well-connected to some of the most important scholar-officials in charge of cultural issues at the time, who were primarily associated with the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy.<sup>209</sup> Therefore, Zhan was able to use Lin Guang's connections to maneuver between these different interest groups and draw support from them.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> This memorial seems irrelevant at first glance. But at the time, the Jiajing Emperor asked the court officials to discuss the matter of separate rituals for heaven and earth respectively in the Northern and the Southern suburb of the capital. Zhan was taking an indirect shot at Zheng Xuan, by using this opportunity to disguise his response to the emperor's previous decision of removing the likes of Zheng Xuan from the Temple earlier in the year.

<sup>208</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 165-166.

<sup>209</sup> Lin Guang's position at the Directorate of Education (*Guozijian* 國子監) allowed him access to the upper echelon in the government, such as Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447-1516), one of the Hanlin Academicians 翰林學士. He was also acquainted with the likes of Zhang Mao 章懋 (1437-1522), Liu Daxia 劉大夏 (1436-1516), Yang Lian 楊廉 (1452-1525). Yang Zhengxian, "Baisha," 13.

<sup>210</sup> Zhan Ruoshui was a close friend to Wang Yangming. In addition, supporters of Hu Juren's enshrinement proposals were targeting Chen and Wang together. To ease the tension between the two groups, in 1573, the emperor issued an edict to allow the enshrinement of Chen and Wu in local academies.

The stage was set for the 1584 enshrinement. Among the three figures, Hu Juren died the youngest. He died at the age of 51 in 1484. As an intellectual who was known for his close affiliation to the Cheng-Zhu school, his case of enshrinement was without much contest, for most scholar-officials involved in the debates agreed with his credential as a proper Confucian. One aspect about Hu's enshrinement that should be noted, however, was that support for Hu's enshrinement was rather overdue given his Cheng-Zhu affiliation. A fellow Cheng-Zhu scholar, Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389-1464), was recommended and enshrined 13 years earlier in 1571, while it was not until the first year of the Wanli 萬曆 reign era (1573-1620) in 1573 that the first proposal recommending Hu Juren's enshrinement was submitted to the emperor by the Censor of Shaanxi,<sup>211</sup> Li Yi 李頤 (d. 1602).<sup>212</sup> Although a series of enshrinement proposal supporting Hu followed,<sup>213</sup> for a figure whose intellectual lineage was widely seen as "orthodox," the delayed enshrinement proposals should raise some suspicions.

A logical reason was that Hu Juren lacked students who occupied influential positions at court, and that his promotion of private academies had led many to connect him with the group of "unorthodox intellectuals" to which Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming belonged. With court officials suddenly began submitting enshrinement

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But because of Wang Yangming's banned status as "false leaning" from the eighth year of the Jiajing era to the first year of the Longqing reign era 隆慶 (1567-1573), Wang Yangming was not reconsidered at the time.

<sup>211</sup> Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 592.

<sup>212</sup> *Ming shilu* 明實錄, 9.319.

<sup>213</sup> *Ming shilu*, 151.2798, 2866-2868.

proposals for Hu Juren around this time, it is uncertain whether the support was generated by genuine concern about Hu Juren's status or that those Hu Juren supporters were submitting the proposals as a response, or a counter move, to another group of scholar-officials' enshrinement proposals.

During this same time period, the only candidates that were also being recommended for enshrinement were Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming. For Chen Xianzhang, the first proposal of enshrinement was very early. Around 1530, not long after Wang Yangming's death, Wang's student Xue Kan 薛侃 (1486-1545) submitted a memorial pleading for Chen Xianzhang's and Lu Jiuyuan's enshrinement in the Confucian Temple.<sup>214</sup> This was undoubtedly a move intended to pave the way for Wang's enshrinement in the future.<sup>215</sup> But only Lu Jiuyuan's enshrinement was approved. And no further action was taken to advocate for Chen because of Xue Kan's imprisonment the following year.<sup>216</sup> No other memorial supporting this proposal was submitted until 1567 by the then Chief Supervising Secretary at the Office of Scrutiny,<sup>217</sup> Wei Shiliang 魏時亮 (1529-1591).<sup>218</sup> In the same year, Censor Geng Dingxiang 耿定向 (1524-1596) also submitted another memorial to the emperor recommending the enshrinement of Wang

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<sup>214</sup> *Guozhao xianzheng lu* 國朝獻徵錄, 8.1-2.

<sup>215</sup> Wang Yangming's ideas were considered closest to those of Lu and Chen.

<sup>216</sup> *Mingshi* states that Xue's imprisonment was a result of his memorial to the Jiajing Emperor on the issue of selecting instructors for the princes. The emperor took it as a personal attack against him and punished Xue for it. *Mingshi*, 209.5468-5469.

<sup>217</sup> Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 133.

<sup>218</sup> *Ming shilu*, 10.358.

Yangming.<sup>219</sup> One of the possible reasons for this new round of petitions supporting Chen and Wang to surface could be related to Xu Jie's 徐階 (1503-1583) presence at court as the Grand Secretary. As previous scholarship has pointed out, the successful petition for Wang Yangming's enshrinement was essentially tied to Xu's support.<sup>220</sup>

Strangely, when Xue Kan submitted his petition for Chen's enshrinement in 1530, Zhan, who was serving as the Right Assistant Minister of Rites in Beijing at the time,<sup>221</sup> did not show any support. Instead, he waited until four years after Xue Kan had passed away to write a laudatory account for Xue Kan when Xue was being installed in a local memorial hall in Chaozhou, Guangdong in 1549.<sup>222</sup> Zhan Ruoshui's last significant effort in making Chen Xianzhang a more "worthy" candidate for enshrinement by redefining Chen's status in the Confucian tradition and his legacy as a Confucian came in 1551, when Zhan arranged the carving of a new woodblock edition of Chen Xianzhang's complete collected works.<sup>223</sup> Zhan died at the age of 95 in 1560. Although he was unable to witness what he had architected, Zhan's endeavors in redefining Chen Xianzhang's legacy in accordance with the *li yan* and the *li de* standards were proved successful at the end.

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<sup>219</sup> *Ming shilu*, 7.261-262.

<sup>220</sup> Yang Zhengxian, "Wang Yangming *nianpu* yu congshi kongmiao zhi yanjiu," 153-187.

<sup>221</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 162.

<sup>222</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 319-320.

<sup>223</sup> Li Yeming, *Zhan Ruoshui nianpu*, 331.

With the death of Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), the powerful Grand Secretary during the beginning of the Wanli reign (1573-1620) and a strong critic of Wang Yangming's ideas, the Wanli Emperor 萬曆帝 (1563-1620) was unable to withstand the demand of court scholar-officials. Ray Huang also noted that Wanli, after the death of Zhang Juzheng, "again and again yielded to his courtiers."<sup>224</sup> In 1584, Wanli issued an edict requesting court officials to discuss the enshrinement of Chen Xianzhang, Hu Juren, and Wang Yangming. Shen Li 沈鯉 (1531-1615), the Minister of Rites at the time, was in charge of leading the discussions. Despite strong support for Chen and Wang among officials, Shen Li imperiously ignored their recommendations and submitted his suggestion for the enshrinement decision to the emperor in the winter of 1584, and approved Hu Juren alone, while opposing the enshrinement of Chen and Wang. Shen Li stated in his petition submitted to the emperor:

Their [Chen and Wang] level of erudition aside; look at those who the ministers speak of as 'lecturers of discussion [gatherings],' they severely lack any lofty insights. It is because the Way of Confucius, Mencius, and the Six Classics are as bright as the sun and the stars. And the writings of the various Confucians of the Han and the Song have already exhausted the limits of their illumination.

Although there are discussions that come after them, they simply are no longer capable of adding any value to the already prestigious collection. Scholars should also remain with their masters' teachings with regards to how to contemplate and

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<sup>224</sup> Ray Huang argued that Wanli's weakness was largely a result of his lack of experience in making decisions on his own as a "free" individual rather than as a man occupying a highly institutionalized position that is the Ming imperial throne. Ray Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 102-103.

argue about their learning, and how to investigate and reach the utmost level of sincerity and righteousness. Those about self-cultivation and government should be balanced. With every object, investigate precisely and diligently... As for those who resent and disrespect the instructions of antiquity, and desire to become famous scholars themselves, are merely trying to draw the duke's head with unnecessary length and trying to draw legs for a snake to show their craftiness. They treat the Way of daily conduct and human relationship as something useless and avoid discussing them.<sup>225</sup>

夫學亦安可不講也。顧臣等之所謂講學者，殊無甚高論。蓋六經孔孟之道，既昭如日星，而漢宋諸儒之書，又發明殆盡，後雖有述，何以復加所貴乎。學者亦守其師說，慎思明辨如何為，格致誠正如何為，齊治均平，隨事精察...而厭薄古訓，欲自名家，至為續晷頭以見長，添蛇足以工畫，於子臣弟友，日用常行之道，反視為弁髦不講焉。

Shen Li's action enraged many officials involved in the discussions. In the *Wanli yehuo pian* 萬曆野獲編 by Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642), there was a detailed description of the scene at the court during the discussions of enshrining Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming. Shen Defu recalled:

Recently, on the *jia* day of this month, officials presented memorials to recommend the enshrinement of Chen Xianzhang in the Confucian Temple. The official in charge [of the Ministry of Rites] at the time was Shen Li (1531-1615).

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<sup>225</sup> *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成, 720.12b.

There also was the suspicion that the great eunuch Zhang Hong (d. 1584) was orchestrating this. They refused to approve the memorials and the recommendations were denied. The Inner Chambers<sup>226</sup> issued multiple notices to the officials to urge for the approval of the enshrinement recommendations. It [the Inner Chambers] was therefore not in agreement with the government... Those who disagreed with this decision were caned a hundred times at court. They were threatened that the next time they would be tried and sent for execution. The Legal Official Mao Kai (1506-1570) and several others argued against this intensely, but failed.

今上甲申議崇祀陳獻章於孔廟。禮臣為沈鯉。亦疑大璫張宏主之。不肯行。而內閣竟票發多官。會議允祀。由是與政府不協... 乃杖之百。下法司論斬。刑官毛愷等力爭之不能得。<sup>227</sup>

The newly appointed Grand Secretary at the time, Shen Shixing 申時行 (1535-1614), defended Chen and Wang and advocated their enshrinement. Although he was likely motivated by the political incentives in supporting his colleagues, Shen Shixing nonetheless demonstrated genuine concern for the recognition of Chen and Wang. He described Chen and Wang as “successors” to the sages of antiquity and the Song Confucian masters, and therefore should be honored alongside the previous Confucian

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<sup>226</sup> Synonymous to the Office of the Grand Secretary (*shoufu* 首輔). The shadow of the former Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), who was known to be a strong critic of the Wang Yangming School and *jianghui*, was very much still in effect at the time. Chen Xianzhang, for his similarities with Wang, was probably regarded negatively as well. Huang Chin-shing, *Youru shengyu*, 283; Lü Miao-fen, *Yangming xue shiren*, 59-60.

<sup>227</sup> Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wangli yehuo pian* 萬曆野獲編, 2.47.

greats. Most remarkably, Shen Shixing called Chen and Wang “Confucians that inspire with actions, not words.” This corresponded to not only the shift of focus in measuring the qualification of enshrinement candidates, it also corresponded to the life-long endeavors of Chen and Wang in promoting private academies through action.<sup>228</sup> Shen Shixing’s defense of Chen and Wang not only accurately responded to the criticisms against them at the time, but also drew power from the larger cultural and intellectual discourse. Shortly afterward, the Wanli Emperor agreed with Shen Shixing’s defense and approved the enshrinement of Chen, Wang, and Hu. Regardless of whether or not it was due to pressure from his colleagues who were supporting Chen and Wang, Shen

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<sup>228</sup> Wang Yangming’s contribution was recognized by this statement in the *Ming shilu*:

If Yangming’s teachings of ‘attaining innate morality’ is [taken] from the *Great Learning*, his idea of ‘attaining the utmost level of morality’ originated in the *Mencius*, and Xianzhang’s main ideal of ‘quiescence’ is developed along the [ideas of] Song Confucians such as Zhou Dunyi and Cheng Hao, then they are all teachings of the early masters and the instructions from the Classics. They shall be protected under the wings of the Confucian truth. To say that they are following the codes of Buddhism has to be out of order and reason, and lacking realistic considerations. Now, the filial piety and loyalty of Xianzhang, and the determination of Xianzhang in remaining in academia and outside of politics, can they be called “Buddhists?” The moral integrity of Yangming, the writings [of ideas] of Yangming, the great merit and accomplishment of Yangming, can they be called “Buddhists” as well? People said that they had no contribution to the School of the Sages [Confucianism]. But how can one must have exegetical writings first before they can be considered as meritorious? Those Sages, who inspire with action, are more meritorious than those who inspire merely with words. Those who say honoring Wang means abandoning Zhu do not know that they inspire and illuminate the understanding of each other. They can by practice simultaneously and do not contradict each other. During the Song times, between the School of Zhu and the School of Lu was animosity and rift. But now, they are enshrined together in the Confucian Temple. The learning of Zhu Xi was not abolished because of Lu’s enshrinement. Then why would it be abolished because of Wang’s? Truly, enshrining Yangming and Xianzhang would illustrate the practicality of a true Confucian that refuses to be confined by obsolete ideas, and illuminates the self-attained nature of true learning that does not focus solely on just seeing and hearing. It will be enormously beneficial to the civilization of the realm through sagely beliefs. 若守仁言致知出于大學，言良知本于孟子。獻章主靜，沿于宋儒周敦頤，程顥。皆祖述經訓，羽翼聖真。豈其自創一門戶耶。謂其禪家宗旨，必外倫理，遺世務而後可。今孝友如獻章，出處如獻章，而謂之禪可乎？氣節如守仁，文章如守仁，功業如守仁，而謂之禪可乎？謂其無功聖門，豈必著述而後為功。聖賢于道，有以身發明者，比于以言發明，功尤大也。謂其崇王則廢朱，不知道固互相發明，並行而不悖。在宋時朱陸兩家如鸞隙，今並祀學宮。朱氏之學，昔既不以陸廢，今獨以王廢乎？誠祀守仁獻章 一以明真儒之有用，而不安於拘曲一以明實學之自得，而不專于見聞斯，于聖化大有裨。

“Ming Shenzong shilu 明神宗實錄 (Archival Records of the Shenzong Emperor of Ming),” *Ming shilu* 明實錄, 155.2865-2868.



Shixing's recognition of Chen and Wang signified the Ming Confucian community's acceptance of the new paradigm suggested by the three intellectuals, and that the general pattern of the "localization of elite" was able to triumph at the end.

4.2 TABLE 1: TABLE OF MAJOR SUPPORTERS OF EACH ENSHRINEMENT  
CANDIDATES

Candidates for the 1584 Enshrinement	Name of Supporters	Native Origin of Supporters
1. Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章	Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466 – 1560)	Zengcheng 增城, Guangdong
	Xue Kan 薛侃 (1486 – 1545)	Jieyang 揭陽, Guangdong
	Wei Shiliang 魏時亮 (1529 – 1591)	Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi
2. Hu Juren 胡居仁	Li Yi 李頤 (d. 1602)	Yugan 餘干, Jiangxi
	Shen Li 沈鯉 (1531 – 1615)	Guide 歸德, Henan
3. Wang Yangming 王陽明	Xu Jie 徐階 (1503 – 1583)	Huating 華亭, Suzhou
	Geng Dingxiang 耿定向 (1524 – 1596)	Huangnan 黃安, Huguang

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The case of the 1584 enshrinement ended with Chen, Wang, and Hu enshrined together as representatives of a new intellectual and cultural paradigm. Although they represented two ends of the philosophical spectrum, they shared the same devotion to private academies and commitment to their respective local communities. As for Chen and Hu, they had served as pioneers in promoting the early revitalization of private academies in the mid-Ming. Their private academies eventually provided inspiration to the later *jianghui* culture. More importantly, Chen's and Hu's prominence in their lifetimes, despite the lack of a *jinshi* degree, led the larger Confucian community to rethink the value of private academies and the potential these regional venues offered. This thinking pointed directly to the core problem at the heart of many Confucian scholar-officials at the time, which was to find a new way to assert their influence on political discourses. With the emergence of Wang Yangming, some of that lost power to criticize the state was regained. Wang Yangming's brilliant ideas offered theoretical support to Chen's and Hu's models of which they otherwise lacked. And the theoretical platform established by Yangming successfully brought forth the shift of ideal from "assisting the ruler to practice the Way" to "awakening the masses to practice the Way," and changed the Ming intellectual and political landscapes forever. In an era where imperial power was unprecedentedly despotic, Wang Yangming's ideas were not only products of his ingenuity, but products of the reality in which he lived, which was also Chen's and Hu's realities. It seemed that the relationship between the three intellectuals

can simply be described as passing a torch. Even in the long history of Confucianism, that torch was quite monumental.

Throughout the process in which Chen Xianzhang's students redefined their master's intellectual lineage in the Confucian tradition and secured support from different political fractions in supporting Chen's case of enshrinement, Chen's students demonstrated incredible political acumen and determination in putting their school in the best position possible for future recognition. Although there was strong tension between Chen's various students, through this process, one was able to see the diversity within one school of thought and witness how the school was able to overcome inner conflicts. The process also illustrated the level of complexity existed in both the minds and the roles of Confucian intellectuals as bureaucrats.

The enshrinement of 1584 also served as an example in demonstrating the intense battle between imperial power and cultural power in the Ming. The changes in qualification standards for enshrinement candidates demonstrated that the intrusion of imperial power into the cultural realm was not enough to completely suppress the cultural power of the Confucian intellectuals. Instead, it granted the Confucian intellectuals the opportunity to evolve. The shift of focus from central politics to local politics during this time period enabled Confucian intellectuals to look beyond the central bureaucracy and find new life outside of the political establishment. With the new ideals represented by Chen, Hu, and Wang gaining momentum and supporters both within and without the bureaucracy,<sup>229</sup> the Wanli Emperor, who had recently lost his most powerful political

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<sup>229</sup> According to the account in the *rulin zhuan* 儒林傳 in the Standard History of Ming (*Mingshi* 明史), ever since the Jiajing and Longqing (1567-1573) reign eras, only a very few have not yet turn to the new ideals promoted by Chen and Wang. It says: "After the Jiajing and Longqing reign eras, those who still

ally, Zhang Juzheng,<sup>230</sup> was unable to quell the demands from his ministers for the official recognition of the three intellectuals at the national level. In 1584, the Confucian Temple again served the interest of the Confucian intellectuals, bestowing the highest honor of enshrinement and state recognition on three individuals who were pioneers in finding new ways to advance the Confucian tradition in a time of oppression. Chen, Hu, and Wang inevitably became symbols of the Confucian tradition's intrinsic ability to adapt to and to shape the political culture of imperial China in imaginative ways. The void in current scholarship about Chen Xianzhang, his relationship with Hu Juren and Wang Yangming, and his contribution to the overall Ming political and intellectual worlds is therefore supplemented by the analysis of Xianzhang's role in the revival and politicization of private academies and his students' effort to strengthen his case for enshrinement. With this new understanding about Chen Xianzhang's historical significance, further assessment about the roles of Cantonese Confucian intellectuals in the larger Ming state and society could be done in years to come.

The Cantonese speaking region, as one of the most culturally different regions from the central state of China, offers an important lens into the manifold relationships between the Chinese empire and its peripheral peoples. As the central-versus-peripheral narrative continues to assert influence on modern China, the study of China, both historical and contemporary, through the perspective of this narrative has never been

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firmly believe in the Cheng-Zhu ideas and have not yet turn to a different path were few.” 「嘉、隆而後，篤信程、朱，不遷異說者，無復幾人矣。」, *Mingshi*, 282.7222; Although Huang Chin-shing argues that the Cheng-Zhu school of thought was still the orthodoxy for “official schools,” the Chen-Wang ideas were clearly becoming prevalent among intellectuals and court officials. Huang, *Youru shengyu*, 282.

<sup>230</sup> Zhang Juzheng was also a life-long critic of Wang Yangming's philosophies. His opposition against the enshrinement of Chen and Wang was consistent with his thinking.

more relevant. The historical study of such peripheral region as Canton (Guangdong) is more worthwhile and meaningful now than ever before. This thesis has merely presented and revealed one tip of the iceberg. There are still plenty of issues surrounding the region of Canton, and its significance and contribution to the overall historical and cultural development of China. Hidden in these issues are valuable lessons for understanding the origin and evolution of central-peripheral tensions in contemporary China.

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